POETICAL WORKS

of

ROBERT BRIDGES

Volume V

London
Smith, Elder & Co.
15 Waterloo Place
1912



OXFORD: HORACE HART
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BRIDGES

VOLUME THE FIFTH CONTAINING

THE CHRISTIAN CAPTIVES . . . p. 1
HUMOURS OF THE COURT . . . 127
NOTES 293

LIST OF PREVIOUS EDITIONS

✱

CHRISTIAN CAPTIVES.

1. *THE CHRISTIAN CAPTIVES. A Tragedy in Five Acts in a mixed manner. Published by Ewd. Bumpus. Holborn Bars. London,* 1890. 4*to. pp.* 101–126.

HUMOURS OF THE COURT.

1. *THE HUMOURS OF THE COURT. A Comedy in Three Acts. Published by Geo. Bell & Sons and J. and E. Bumpus, Lim. London.* 4*to. pp.* 147–181 [1893].

THE CHRISTIAN CAPTIVES



A TRAGEDY
IN A MIXED MANNER



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KING OF FEZ.

ALMEH . . . . . *his daughter.*

SALA BEN SALA. . . . . *his General.*

TARUDANTE. . . . *Prince of Morocco.*

FERDINAND, *ENRIQUE* . . . . *Princes of Portugal.*

ZAPEL . . . . . *maid to Almeh.*

CHORUS OF CHRISTIAN CAPTIVES.

Soldiers, Guards, and Messengers.

The scene is in the garden of a castle of the King of Fez by the sea.

CHRISTIAN CAPTIVES

ACT · I

ALMEH and ZAPEL.

ALMEH.

WHY never came we here before? To think
I have lived for eighteen years shut up in Fez,
Hemmed by the sandy desert, and all the while
There was the sea! To have never seen the sea!

ZAPEL.

If thou hadst ever seen it, where were now
Thy joy? 'tis novelty makes the delight.
To them that in this castle dwell, the sea
Is as the desert was to us at Fez.

Al. Custom will dull the sense of any pleasure.
But set them down at Fez, would they not pine?
There's life in the air. 'Twixt yon blue roomy dome
And watery pavement the young winds charge forth
Stored with refreshment: now we taste the springs
Man's spirit should drink, the very mountain torrent
Of heaven, that were content to slake our throats'
Immortal thirst at stagnant pools. What, Zapel,
Is the limit of our stay? now I am here,
I would abide for ever.

Za. I know as little
As thou. The king, thy sire, came here to fight
The unbelievers: when they are beaten back
We shall go home. But why he sent for thee
I cannot guess.

Al Last night I know not, Zapel,
Whether I slept or waked,—

Za. Nor could I sleep.

Al. But as I lay and listened to the sea,
I plainly heard a waft of singing voices,
That rose and fell and died anon away,
Whiling the dark with some sweet lullaby.

Za. Why, 'twas the Christian captives that thou heardst.

Al. Ah! prisoners in the castle: I had forgot:
'Twas told me. And they are Christians! Can it be

They sing so sweetly?

Za. Nay, I call it not sweet.

'Tis sadder than the moaning of the wind
To hear them praise their god.

Al. True, it was sad:
Unearthly it seemed. Now more than ever, Zapel,
I am glad I came; if there be Christians here,
And I may come to see them. All my life
I have heard strange things of them, and wondered much
What they were like. I'll speak with them. Ha! ha!

Za.

Al. Why not?

Za. They lie chained in a noisome pit,
Where 'tis impossible to come.

Al. Who be they?

What is their fault?

Za. They are captives in the war.

Al. My father doth not use his captives so.

Za. They are unbelievers.

Al. True: yet that's no crime
But what they might impute to us. Were we
In their hands fallen, thus cut off from our homes,
'Twere cruel to be tortured for the faith.

Za. They are worthless dogs.

Al. Alas! is all my teaching

So cast away upon thy boorish soul?
Pity makes brethren of our enemies.

Za. Forgive me, lady; I spoke in haste; and yet—
I would that thou couldst think as I.

Al. Indeed,
That were attainment. Vex me not, I bid thee;
But plan with me how I may see these captives:
Were 't but to have them sing to me I'd do it:
But curiosity and pity alike
Move me. If man is cruel, 'tis woman's part
To ease the suffering which she cannot hinder.

Za. How wouldst thou see them?

Al. I shall ask my father
To grant them, if it be but once a day,
To walk at liberty within the walls.

Za. 'Tis pity Sala is not here.

Al. Thy meaning?

Za. The general hath the keeping of the castle,
And he would work thy way in any wish,
Howe'er preposterous.

Al. And thou sayst not ill.
Sala is approachable and kind at heart:
'Tis pity he is away. [*Trumpets heard without.*

Za. Here comes the king;
He bade me shew thee hither in the garden,
And here will look to find thee.

Al. Go, I bid thee,
And tell him that I am here. [*Exit Zapel.*
Now shall I know why I was sent for hither.
Would 'twere to take this castle for my own,
With no more retinue than might suffice
To till this garden, and to cook my food.
I'd win these Christian captives to my service
For ministers and minstrels; ay, and they
Should row me on the water. I'd have my books
In the northern tower, where set on high my lamp,
Forestalling darkness with its seaward ray,
Sailors should look for, and on tranquil nights
Hear solemn music faintly, and believe
There was enchantment. Could I have my will,
So would I live. And where's the gain to be
The daughter of a king, if every wish
Nearest one's heart is of like course denied,
As to the meanest peasant . . . when one word,
One nod could grant it?

Enter King.

KING.

Almeh! my rose of June!
Queen of my gardens, flower of all my kingdom!
Al. Honour be thine, my sire.
K. I bring thee joy.

Hast thou not wondered why I sent for thee?

Al. Why was it? I long to know.

K. (*giving*). See for thyself.

Al. A picture!

K. 'Tis a portrait.

Al. And of whom?

K. Dost thou not guess who this young Kaled is:
This high and dauntless brow, this stalwart arm,
Keen eye and martial poise?

Al. If this be he,
Who made of late entreaty for my hand,
Prince Tarudante . . .

K. A happy omen. Ay,
Look, girl, and love him, for he wooes thee well
With all Morocco.

Al. Yet I cannot love
Thy wish to banish me so far.

K. Thy marriage
Will bring Morocco nearer, and renew
Our old alliance: for thy valiant lover
Comes not with gold to woo thee, but sharp steel.
His flag is black, his ceremonious train
Are twenty thousand horsemen sworn to avenge
The Prophet . . . Ceuta will be mine.

Al. Ah, sire!
I like not love that comes with war to woo.

K. But war that shall bring peace, whose lasting olive
May not be sceptred in my hand, until
This fallen jewel be set back in my crown.
Thy marriage with Morocco shall wipe out
The old dishonour that hath vexed my reign.

Al. And yet doth Ceuta, sire, in all thy kingdom
Rank as a little town.

K. Thou art a woman;
How can I show thee? This anemone,
'Tis beautiful, nor canst thou say its grace
Resides in this part nor in that: but look;
I pluck a petal from it.—Thou beholdest
My kingdom without Ceuta. Wouldst thou wish
To set this back unto the perfect flower?

Al. How could I do it?

K. I must tell thee all.
Our ancestors, thou knowest, blest be their names,
Long ruled in Spain, and made that coign of the earth
The glory of all; but to the peaceful arts
Turning their genius when they sat to rule,
Their prudence slept: for that half-barbarous race,
Whom conquering they had spared, grew up more apt
In arms, and rising 'gainst our easy folk
O'erthrew and dispossest them;—and, not content
To have driven us out of Spain, pursued us hither,
Where in our southern bounds we lived retired

Behind the ocean as an ample shield.
'Twas in thy grandsire's time, ere thou wert born,
They did this wrong; the boastful Portuguese
Swoln with malevolence,—why should I say it?—
King Joam and his sons, all unprovoked,
For we had oaths of peace, attacked us here
With sudden treacherous assault, and seized
Ceuta, our strongest barrier thitherward.
Impregnable we deemed it, and indeed
Impregnable have found it 'gainst ourselves
For twenty years besieging it in vain.
Then should this shame, unbearable to us,
Prove but incitement to our foes, a foothold
For further wresting. Two months have not passed
Since that a new Armada sailed from Tagus
Against Tangiers, and both by land and sea
Beleaguering would have reft that city too,
And added my dishonour to my father's,
Had not Ben Sala's generalship o'ermatched
Their most infernal malice. Praised be Allah!
They fell, they fled; and such as fled not lie
Dead on our sands, or in our dungeons chained.

Al. Are those the captives in the castle pit?

K. Ay, but thou breakst my tale;—mark what I tell.—
The victory mine, I looked to make fair peace,

And would have given my prisoners in exchange
For Ceuta; but the prince of Portugal,
Behind those walls retired, refused the ransom;
And gathering reinforcement hath come forth
To devastate the country. 'Tis 'gainst him
That Sala marched five days ago. Meanwhile
Morocco, who was treating for thy hand,
Heard tidings of our war, and having now
An armament collected 'gainst the tribes,
Has turned it to my rescue. 'Twas for this
I sent for thee; in furtherance of thy marriage;
Hoping thereby to bind him in the terms
I have to tell thee. However Sala fare,
And hitherto no news comes from his camp,
'Twere no achievement worthy of Tarudante
To make dispersal of a broken foe:
I shall propose a greater enterprise;
I'll say 'Thou wilt not grudge to sweep the bounds
Of the fair realm, whose heiress thou wouldst wed.
Make we this compact—Win me Ceuta back
And drive the idolaters across the sea,
Ere thou take home my daughter for thy queen.'

Al. But doth Morocco, sire, know I am here?

K. Nay, nor myself knew, when I sent for thee,
How 'twould fall out: 'twas timed most happily.

Al. But coming not to woo, may he not find

Offence in the constraint; as I confess
I feel to lay it on him, tho' my lover?

K. Nay, nay, girl; he is in earnest; meet him frankly;
'Tis by his love thou shalt restore my town.

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.

News from the army, Sire.

K. Thou lookest black:
What is it? speak.

Mess. O mighty king, 'tis ill.
Sala ben Sala's forces were attacked
At nightfall by the Christians. In the dark
Was battle waged. By morn what men remained
And all the camp were captive.

K. God forbid!
Five thousand men were there: be none escaped?

Mess. Such as in darkness fled.

K. And fledst thou thence?

Mess. The general sent me on.

K. And what of him?

Mess. The dawn discovered him, when all was lost,
Fighting on foot upon a little hill,
Surrounded by the foe; when seeing no hope,
He made surrender to the Christian leader,

Who gave him liberty. Thus far to tell
He bade, and that he followed speedily.
K. When will he come?
Mess. Sire, tho' I used all duty,
He hath overtaken me and dismounts without.
K. Go, wait upon him. [*Exit Messenger.*
Accursed be the seed
Of these idolaters. Five thousand men,
The best in Fez: the right arm of my power
Lost in one night. Five thousand men were there.
Ah! by God's holiest names!
Al. Thank heaven, dear father,
The best is saved, if Sala be escaped.
K. True, girl: and from the ill there's good to come:
Their victory will lead these devils on.
Ay, they will come. They know not of Morocco;
They run into a trap.
Al. Will you make peace?
K. God bids us smite these hogs: I would that hell
Were deeper to receive them.

Enter Sala.

Sala ben Sala, peace be with thee!

SALA.

The peace of heaven be thine, my king!
K. Thou comest

Most swiftly from the battle.

Sa. With less haste
Than needed; but fatigue and wounds delayed me.
What see I? The princess here! Alas, alas!
O my disaster!

Al. Now I thank God, Sala, 220
That thou'rt alive.

Sa. To such shame is not good.
Sire, while there's time, escape; and leave me here
To hold the castle for thee as I may.

K. Have thou no fear, Sala. My daughter, go:
Leave us alone: or better sit thou there,
And hear what Sala tells: and, Sala, thou
Begin the tale, for which thy messenger
Hath well prepared my ear. Here is thy seat.

Sa. Hear then, my liege, what happened, as I tell.
(*Aside.*) Yet how to tell my shame in Almeh's ears?—
'Tis the fifth day since thou didst send me forth 231
Against the Christian bands, which as we learned
Harassed the plains of Ceuta.—Thither I marched
Four thousand strong, besides our cavalry
And bowmen: Here and there some small encounters
Drove back the foe within the gates, and then
I made return, establishing the country
And strengthening the garrisons, nor heard
That any greater force had come afield:

When yesterday at noon our scouts espied
The flash of arms and dust of troops moving
Among the hills: thither we turned our face,
And had no fear but for the foe's escape,
Nor guessed how much the lurking enemy
Outmatched our weakened numbers. What surprise,—
I blame myself,—then, when our scouts came in
At sunset with the tidings that the foe,
Whom we thought flying from us, held the pass
Against our coming. Straight I chose a spot
Such as we might defend, and there encamped,
And would have stayed till morn, when suddenly
The stragglers on our rear were driven in
By horse that fell upon our flank; and soon
I heard our front engaged. The moon to them,
—That was our peril,—the accursed yellow moon
Exposed our camp, while in the shadowy glens
The night hid their attack: our disposition
Was else not ill. Taking sufficient force,
I turned to clear the rear; but in the dark
Met with great numbers. How we fought God knows,
Surrounded on all hands. If any fled
I cannot guess: but battling there till dawn,
I saw at daybreak there were left with me
But hundreds against thousands. Then to save
The needless slaughter, I gave up my sword

Unto the Christian leader, Ferdinand
Of Portugal; nor ever had here returned
To speak of the disaster, but that prince,
Clement as valiant, questioned courteously
My name, and hearing it returned my sword,
And bidding me choose out from all his suite
What horse I fancied,—for my own was killed,—
He raised his helm, and said,
'Go free, brave Sala; ride and tell thy king
We follow thee to rescue from his hands
The prisoners he withholds:' That is my tale.
Allah is great, and what he doth to-day
To-morrow he may undo.

K. This courteous Christian
Is but a fool: for had he kept thee fast,
He might have had his men in thy exchange.

Sa. No less now must thou grant them.

K. No, by God.
Hark, Sala: these few days thou hast been away
Have brought me from the east four times the force
Which thou ill-fatedly hast lost. Morocco
Lies camped a short league hence, and in his tents
Are twenty thousand men.

Sa. Morocco is here?

K. Said I not well? Is he not one to meet
These Christians? Let them come. How many be

Sa. Eight, maybe, or nine thousand. Where's Morocco?

K. At Alcabar. When look they to be here?

Sa. They have no thought we can oppose their host,
And will not hasten.

K. We will be ready for them.
Prepare to leave by noon: thou must collect
What men thou canst. I will go write my summons
To Tarudante. Stay: I have not enquired
What are thy wounds.

Sa. Nothing that should forbid
Immediate service: food, an hour of rest
Will make me fit.

K. In three hours be thou ready. [*Exit.*

Al. Go thou within, Sala; and rest thee now.
Or wilt thou first take food?

Sa. There's time enough.
Bid me not hence, my rest and food are here.
How cam'st thou hither?

Al. The king sent for me.

Sa. And why? Thee in the camp! O beauteous Almeh,
Dost thou think vilely of me, that the Christian
Surprised and overcame me? If I had known

That thou wast here . . .

Al. Stay, Sala : thou wilt hurt
Thy soldiership. I doubt not Ferdinand
Is a most worthy foe : I rather fear
He hath a quality unconquerable.

Sa. Ha! then I am scorned.

Al. I mean he is generous :
He set thee free. Couldst thou not match that deed?

Sa. As friend or foe I would outmatch him bravely.
Nay but to see him in his angel-fairness
Provoked my emulation, and I vowed
Some day to kill his horse, and take his sword,
And cry him quit.

Al. Still thou'rt for war : 'twere better
Repay him with the gift that he demands,
These miserable captives.

Sa. I would have done so.
But thou didst hear the king refuse. He is sworn
To grant no terms till Ceuta be restored.
Our law moreover doth forbid this traffic,
To exchange our captives with the infidels.

Al. But hast thou then thyself, Sala, no power
To do them any kindness; or for me
Wilt thou not grant them so much liberty
As to walk in the garden once a day?
If I might speak with them I might do somewhat

To pay the debt we owe their general;
And to speak truth, for my own sake I ask it.

Sa. How for thy sake?

Al. I wish to hear them sing.

Sa. How could that please? Who told thee that they sing?

Al. 'Twas last night, Sala, as I lay long awake
Dreamily hearkening to the ocean murmur,
Softer than silence, on mine ears there stole
A solemn sound of wailful harmony:
So beautiful it was that first I thought
This castle was enchanted, as I have read
In eastern tales; or else that 'twas the song
Of people of this land, who make the sea
Their secret god, and at midnight arise
To kneel upon the shore, and his divinity
Trouble with shrilling prayer: or then it seemed
A liquid-voicèd choir of spirits that swam
Upon the ocean surface, harp in hand,
Swelling their hymns with his deep undersong.
That was the Christian captives.

Sa. 'Twas the night
Softened their wails to sweetness: as the space
'Twixt hell and heaven makes the cries of the damned
Music to the angels.

Al. Sala, 'tis not the king,

'Tis thou art cruel; thou hast a heart of hate.
Sa. O nay, a heart of love. I would not count
Dishonour, Almeh; I would be at peace
With shame and infidels and all the world,
Wouldst thou be mine.
Al. Now, if my father heard thee!
Thou dar'st much, thinking that I cannot tell:
Which if I have never done, 'tis that I am loth
To lose so old a friend; 'tis pain to see
That as I am grown from childhood, thou art grown
From friendship, and for loving me too much
Must love me now no more.
Sa. Ah! what is that?
A portrait in thy hand? Nay show it me.
Why dost thou blush? Who is the happy one
Thou carriest thus to gaze on?
Al. Look and see.
Sa. 'Tis Tarudante. O thou faithless Almeh,
To speak of friendship who hast never told me
Thou hast a lover. Now I see the cause
Why thou art here. This boy.—'Tis a smooth cheek,
A pretty picture. Ah! wert thou not shamed
To slight me for a sprinkling of grey hair
About my temples, thou wouldst never thus
Have hid thy passion.
Al. Tho' thou hast stolen from me

A privilege to love me, I deny thee
The liberty to judge me and reprove.
Sa. Ever, when thou hast bidden my love be dumb,
My tongue hath been obedient: but my anger,
My jealousy will speak. How gottest thou this?
Al. Question not so, or I will never tell.
Sa. Have pity, Almeh, and tell me.
Al. Then 'tis thus.
My father gave it me this very hour,
As herald of the prince whom it portrays.
He comes on double mission, first to fight
Against our foes . . .
Sa. Hast thou consented, Almeh?
Al. If 'tis my father's will, and if the prince
Be earnest in his courtship . . .
Sa. Ah! thou dost wish it.
Al. My wish can count but little: but my wish
Is not for this nor any other marriage.
Sa. Thou hast yielded to the thought. Would I had died
On Ferdinand's sword; or that his ear had ne'er
Heard my ill-fated name, Sala, far happier
Chained in a Spanish galley, than set free
To find thee in a rival's arms.
Al. O shame!
How have I yielded?

Sa. Thou hast taken in hand
This cursèd portrait: held it . . .
Al. Nay, I pray.
Sa. Gazed on it, fondled it: a pictured boy!
Thy champion.
Al. I bid thee think . . .
Sa. A painted image!
Al. And what, pray, wouldst thou have had me do?
Sa. What do?
Never to have taken it: refused it: scorned it:
Cast it beneath thy feet: trodden it to atoms.
Al. Thou wrongst me, Sala, now: thou art overcome
With fasting and much fighting.
Sa. O, I am wronged
To have the temper of my passion judged
As hunger or fatigue. Here is thy picture,
Thy lover. Take it back. Farewell. I go,
But not to eat or rest. Almeh, farewell:
I would have died for thee.
Al. Nay, go not thus
Unkindly.
Sa. 'Tis farewell: but not unkindness,
Lest thou shouldst say my last word was unkindness,
I will go seek the king, and shall persuade him
Ere I depart to grant the Christian captives

The little liberty which thou hast asked :
Then to the war ; wherein I pray that heaven
Hath laid my death : if anywhere on earth
Within my reach, I'll find it. O farewell.
The Angels guard thee. [*Going.*

Ala I bid thee go not thus.

ACT · II

ALMEH and ZAPEL listening. The Christian Captives are singing at back among the trees.

CHORUS.

JESU dulcis memoria,
Dans vera cordis gaudia;
Sed super mel et omnia
Ejus dulcis præsentia.

ZAPEL.

How strange a moan!

ALMEH.

Hush, Zapel, hush: go in.
Leave me. Stay, I will go with thee so far
That they shall think we both are gone. This way.

Almeh and Zapel go aside. Exit Zapel. Almeh enters arbour.

CHORUS. *Jesu decus angelicum,*
In aure dulce canticum,
In ore mel mirificum,
In corde nectar cælicum.

Nil canitur suavius,
Nil auditur jucundius,
Nil cogitatur dulcius,
Quam Jesu Dei filius.

Al. (*aside*). They sing of Jesus, whom they make their god,

I understand no more: only their praise
Is sweeter than whatever I have heard
In mosque or sacred temple, or the chant
Of holy pilgrims, that beguile the road.
I'll learn what they will tell me of their hymns,
And whence they have this music. Ah, they see me.
Sir, pray withdraw not thus. Step on this terrace;
Hence may you view the sea. Your helpless lot
I pity; and if indeed I have any power
To ease the pains of your captivity,
'Tis but a debt I owe you for the pleasure
Your music wakes within me. Come this way.

Cho. Lady, we thank thy grace and gentleness:
But yonder grove contents us, in the shade
Where if we walked retired, we shall not strain
The privilege we prize.

Al. Why, since I ask,
Take courage, come. There's none will see but I.

Ch. We dare not disobey.

Al. Come forward, hither.

I bid you all for pleasure as my friends.
And ye could much delight me, would ye tell
What theme ye lately sang: for though sweet music
Needs no interpretation, yet the thought
That gives occasion to the smile of love
Is dear itself; and I am like a lover
Wondering what fancy 'twas, that bred a strain
Of such deliberate joy.

Ch. Forbid the thought,
Lady: the sea, with whose expansive sight
Thou thoughtest to rejoice our prisoned eyes,
Doth not dissever us from our lost homes
With wider deeper gulf, than that which lies
Betwixt our souls and thine. Thou mayst not know.

Al. I know ye sang of Jesus.

Ch. And knowing that,
Wouldst thou know more?

Al. Ay, tell me.

Ch. Praised be God!

Al. I envy you your skill. I prithee tell me.
What was't ye sang.

Ch. The praise of Jesus' name.
'Tis what all nature sings; the whole creation
Ceaseth not, nor is silent in his praise:
Neither God's angels, nor the spirit of man,
With speech directed unto him, nor things

Animate nor inanimate, by the mouth
Of them that meditate thereon: which praise
Music hath perfected, and that we use
Less for his glory, than that thence our souls
May from their weariness arise to him,
In whom is our refreshment and true strength.

Al. I pray you sing again.

Ch. If thou wilt hear,
We will sing more.

O Jesu mi dulcissime,
O spes spirantis animæ,
Te quærunt piæ lacrymæ,
Et clamor mentis intimæ.

Al. Music ne'er found a better speech. I pray
Could I sing with you? Could I learn your art?

Ch. Thou hast the master-secret, loving it.

Al. Many have that: and I can sing alone,
But ne'er have learned your many-voiced skill.

Ch. That is the maker's art: the song being made,
'Tis to sing strictly, and to teach thy phrase
Confident rivalry, as if thou knewest
Thy passion was the deepest, and could blend
The wandering strains in closer harmony.

Al. Make me your pupil. How should I begin?

[*Drums and trumpets without.*

Ch. The king!

Al. Break off, my father is returned;
Lest he should enter here, haste to your bounds,
And be not seen. There will I visit you,
Or bid you forth again.

Ch. We thank thee, lady.

Re-enter Zapel, hurriedly.

Za. My lady, hast thou heard?

Al. What is it, Zapel?

Za. The infidels are routed, and the king
Is coming from the field with Tarudante,
Prince of Morocco, and between them ride
The two chief captains of the unbelievers,
Princes of Portugal: be Allah praised.

Ch. Alas! O woe, alas! Forgive us, lady,
That thus we weep before thee.

Al. Nay, be sure
I pity you myself, and could not blame
Your natural grief. But 'tis the vice of war,
That whatsoever side hath victory,
The misery is alike, nor in the advantage
Is aught to compensate the evil done.
May God give strength to right!

Ch. Amen, Amen!
(*To Z.*) Pray, lady, didst thou say Prince Ferdinand

'Was taken?

Za. Ye may question him himself;
Talk not with me.

Al. I beg you, friends, be gone:
Ye must not stay.

Ch. We will depart and mourn
Within our sultry pit. [*Exeunt.*

Al. My father comes?

Za. He is at the gate.

Al. Whate'er thou'st seen or heard
Between me and these hapless prisoners,
See that thou tell not.

Za. 'Tis an accursed thing.

Al. 'Tis not for thee to judge, but do my bidding.

Za. And thou shouldst trust me better.

Al. I do trust thee,
And therefore bid thee thus.

Za. And I obey.

Al. Is not this Ferdinand they spoke of, he
Whose chivalry we thank for Sala's life?

Za That's he.

Al. Then I shall see this red-crossed knight,
The noblest of them all. The general said
He was of angel fairness: then he is cousin
To the emperor of England.

Za. Thou shalt see

A Moor worth fifty Christian Portuguese,
His conqueror, thy lover Tarudante,
Heir of Morocco.

Al. Silence: see they come.

Enter King with Tarudante and Ferdinand, followed by Enrique and Sala.

Za. (*to A.*). There's Tarudante.

Al. (*aside*). There is Ferdinand.

KING (*to T.*).

Now, noble prince, thou hast overcome our foes;
This is thy second battlefield, whereon
Thy love may win like conquest as thy sword.
Pitch here thy tent, and make thy war in peace.
Forget the reeking and gore-dappled plain
Mid scent of pinks and jasmin, and the flush
Of oleander and full-blooded rose.
See, I will lead thee to the virgin fortress
That thou mayst kneel to take. Come hither, Almeh:
Here is the prince thy lover. Tarudante,
Behold her whom I offer thee for queen.

Al. (*aside, coming forward*). Now of these two might I but choose.

K. Come, daughter,
Put off this modesty.

Al. (*aside*). My eyes refuse him.

TARUDANTE.

Lady, forgive my boldness in desiring
What I had never seen. Thy beauty's fame,
The high nobility of this alliance
Led me so far; but now I have seen, I see
I must be bolder, or renounce my boldness,
That begged a grace so far beyond my thought.

Al. I should be much ashamed, prince, if thy suit,
Which seeks the honour of my father's house,
Stumbled at my unworthiness: but praise
Of pictures,—and mere beauty is no more,—
Exalteth but the maker. May the days
Thou spendest here with us be rich in peace. [*Going.*

FERDINAND (*aside to En.*).

By heaven, the devil is gentle to these Moors:
They match our folk in beauty as in arms.

K. Stay, Almeh, stay! [*Almeh turns.*

ENRIQUE (*to F.*).

These be the Spanish Arab: such a race
Sprang never from the sooty loins of Ham.

Al. (*to K.*). Excuse me, sire, I pray.
[*Exit with Zapel.*

Fer. (*to En.*). Devil or angel or Arab, she hath stolen my soul.

Tar. Such perfect grace, such speech and modesty
Outbid my fancy; I would fight thy battles
For twenty years to call thy treasure mine.

K. I say she is thine, and she is my only child.

SALA (*aside*).

And I must hear this spoken, and hold my peace.

K. So now, prince Ferdinand, the chance of war
In making thee my captive gives me power
To dictate terms which shall content us all.
Thou shalt go free—that is my gift to thee:—
But in return for that,—my profit this,—
I will have Ceuta; 'tis an ancient town,
By name and people African, and held
By followers of the prophet from the day
When truth unconquerable like a flood
Of sunlight dawned on the benighted west.
Thy father robbed it from us, and I ask
That thou restore it. 'Tis thy ransom, prince.
The king, thy brother, will not grudge to yield
To me, a king, part of mine own, which he
Wrongfully came by; if so, he may buy thee,
His natural own, his flesh and blood, whom I
Conquered in self-defence. I'll keep thee here,
Till I may know his will: and to learn that
I'll send thy brother home, the prince Enrique,

To bear him, with what speed he may, the tidings
Of thy defeat, captivity, and the terms
Of thy release. Look not so sorrowful.
Fer. I thank your majesty for just rebuke
Of my discourtesy. By selfish gloom
I mar my entertainment, and belie
My gratitude for kindness to me shewn
Since I was prisoner.
K. No thanks for that:
Nor seek I to impose a countenance
Upon thy proper feeling. Yet if now
Thou'rt sad, I spake in vain.
Fer. 'Tis for my fault
And ill-success I am sad—to have lost my troop,
Or led them to the fate of those whose rescue
They thought to be—not for my private case,
Wherein your terms of ransom but make hope
Impossible: the cession of a town
Under the king's protection, and therewith
The peril of so many Christian souls,
The desecration of our hallowed churches,
The abandonment of loyal loving subjects
Unto the heavy yoke which Islam lays
On true believers. No king would give ear
To such a compact: and your claim falls short;
For what you have urged doth not lay bare the root.

Ceuta is African, but not for that
Mahommedan: this thirsty continent
Had drunk the truth for full four hundred years
Before your prophet's birth; and now we fight
To win back from Mahommet what he took
By force from Christ.
K. What matters it to me
What happened in the days of ignorance?
'Tis written in our book, that the whole world
Shall feel our sword.
Fer. 'Tis writ in ours, that they
Who take the sword, shall perish by the sword.
K. Surely 'twas truly spoken of yourselves.
Yet will I make no change, but my demand
Shall urge upon the king your brother; he
Will thank me for it.
Sa. Now, my gracious master,
Let me befriend our foe. 'Tis four days since
I was his prisoner, and he set me free.
This claim the prince most generously puts by;
Let us not pass it over: let him too
Go find another army: we meanwhile
Have ample force to march against the town.
K. And why should blood be spent where ink will serve?
'Twere thankless answer to our good ally

To put fresh pains upon him, and not use
His full sufficient victory.
Tar. My liege,
I'll serve thee as a son, and to that title
Would prove my fitness.
Sa. (*aside*). By thine absence prove it.
K. And if thou, son, wouldst dally now with war,
Rather than grasp the hours of peace and love,
What shall I think?
Tar. That threat must stay me here.
K. Ay, stay; and I will solve thy scruple thus,
Good Sala. By the laws of chivalry
Thou wouldst do to thy foe as he to thee:
But Ferdinand is not thy prisoner,
Nor can be spared: his brother, prince Enrique,
Whom thou didst truly capture,—tho' my purpose
Was to require his promise to return,—
Him will I give his freedom for thy sake:
If he return he shall not be detained.
En. I thank your majesty: but for my part
I am but a traveller, that took occasion
Of this adventure to inspect your land.
I pray make me the hostage; I am content
With any treatment, might I come to see
Your city of Fez, and from your southward folk
Learn their opinion of the Libyan coast,

Which some aver is circled by one sea
From where we stand to Suez.

K. And so it were,
I care no more than doth a caterpillar:
What could that serve? If thou'rt a man of peace,
The fitter then for our ambassador.

En. 'Tis not for me to choose, and you may trust me
To urge the king to treat upon your terms.
I carry them most gladly.

Fer. (*to K.*). Now, I pray,
Do as my brother begs: let him be hostage,
And make me messenger: I will return.

K. Nay, nay. I doubt thee not: but 'tis my will
Thee to keep, not thy brother.

Fer. Then, my Enrique,
I make appeal to thee. Urge not these terms
On Edward: tell him rather I am myself,
And could not live ashamed.

K. I swear thou wrongst me,
And temptest me to use thee ill. No more.
Begone, Enrique; I shall look to thee
For amicable settlement. Go therefore,
And tell thy king I hold your brother here
Till he surrender Ceuta. As for thee,
Prince Ferdinand; thy word shall be thy chain:
Give me but that, and thou shalt have the freedom

Of all this castle.

Fer. I give 't your majesty.

K. 'Tis well: so all are suited. And thou, Enrique,
Make thy best speed.

En. I go, your majesty.

Fer. (*to E.*). Thou know'st my mind.—

En. (*to F.*). In any case I will deliver thee.

K. No words. Begone, I pray.

En. So fare you well. [*Exit.*

K. (*to T.*). And now, Morocco, come within: I'll show thee
Whatever preparation in thine honour
Is ordered; hoping it may so content thee,
That thou wilt reconsider of thy threat
To leave us with the moon.

Tar. What here I have seen,
Might I not take it with me when I go,
Would hold me fast until the day of doom.

Sa. (*aside*). And may the day of doom come ere thou take it! [*Exeunt K. and T.*

(*To F.*) Most generous prince, forgive me.

Fer. I thank thee, Sala.

Sa. I pressed the king so far as I may dare.
He hath a temper to resent advice,
Which urged, will rather drive him from the matter

It looks to favour, than assist him towards it.
I must find other paths for my goodwill.
Deem me thy servant: and o'erlook the wrong
I seem to have done thee, being again constrained
To fight against thee.

Fer. Say no more, my friend.
We serve our kings. Thou didst defeat our people
By numbers, merely numbers. I prithee tell me
The name of your princess.

Sa. Almeh.

Fer. Betrothed
Already to the prince my conqueror?

Sa. The thing is new. Thou know'st as much as I.

Fer. The prince is fortunate.

Sa. So is the king
In his alliance.

Fer. Is the marriage then
Between the kingdoms rather than the parties?

Sa. If 'twas your war that hath determined it.

Fer. It were a strained ungentle consequence,
That I should sail from Portugal to force
A lover on this lady's inclination.

Sa. I were like grieved.

Fer. Her beauty far exceeds
All that I thought to find. In my own country
Our court holds not her equal.

Sa. I believe it.

Fer. And if her mind be as her speech, endowed...

Sa. Thou owest her so much praise for kindnesses
Done to your prisoned countrymen.

Fer. Ah, Sala,
Where be these captives kept? if thou wouldst help me,
I pray thee bring me in time where I may see them.
I must speak with them.

Sa. That is easy, prince.
Behind these garden grounds is a deep pit,
Used as a quarry once; steep hanging sides
Of rock it hath, that hewn away below
Are inaccessible to any foot
Save the soft lizard, that hath made his home
Among the clefts with scorpions and snakes,
And on the scorching ledges basks all day.
'Tis there these Christians lie. One way there is
Climbing by solid steps of native stone,
That comes up to the ground. Between those rocks
Thou seest the iron gate, and by the gate
The sentinel that keeps it. I would guide thee
To see thy countrymen; but there's no need
To make the hard descent; for once a day,
At prayer and pity of our good princess,
'Tis granted them to come and walk above
In shadow of yon balmy cypress grove,

That skirts the northern brink: and but for this,
Their sole refreshment, all were like to have died
Of woe, and scant food, and the daily stroke
Shelterless of the hot meridian sun.

Fer. Alas!
What fault of theirs deserved such punishment?

Sa. That they refused confession of the prophet.

Fer. To acknowledge him were to renounce their faith.
That is no wrong.

Sa. Whether it be wrong or no,
'Tis not my will they undergo these pains.

Fer. I pray thee lead me to them, if thou mayst.

Sa. Nay, bide thou here, I will throw back the gate,
And bid them forth: and for thy less constraint
Will then depart. [*Goes to back, and exit.*

Fer. Such courtesy and cruelty in one
I never thought to have met, nor found on earth
So fair a prison, with an angel in it,
And no hope of deliverance. Now I see
Nature hath vainly lavished on these Moors
Bravery and beauty and all gifts of pride;
And left them barbarous for lack of thee,
Sweet Pity, of human sorrow born: 'tis thou
Dost raise man 'bove the brutes: 'tis thou dost make
His heart so singular, that he alone,

Himself commiserating, against heaven
Pushes complaint, and finds within his heart
Room for all creatures, that like him are born
To suffer and perish.

Enter Captives from gate; they run to Ferdinand as they see him.

CHOR. Hail, mighty Ferdinand!—
Hail, generous prince!—Behold
Thy countrymen enslaved.—
What hope? what hope? O say—
Arm of our fatherland,
What mercy may be told?—
Com'st thou to set us free?—
Are we already saved?—
Or is it true, the boast
We hear, the triumph-song?—
And art thou too as we,—
(O miserable day)—
Faln into the enemy's hand?—
And com'st thou thus alone?
Thine army slain and lost,—
The cause of Christ o'erthrown.—
What hope? what hope? O say.—

Fer. My friends, the worst is true. Trust still in God.
Ch. Alas! have all our prayers been made in vain?

Fer. Despair not yet.

Ch. What hope then dost thou bring?

Fer. I bring you courage, friends. I come to share
Your prison, since I cannot set you free.

Ch. Alas! thou too art captive. All is lost.—
But if thou share our prison, shall we share
Thy ransom also, when thou goest free?

Fer. I have no ransom, friends, that ye could share.

Ch. No ransom!

Fer. Nay, no ransom.

Ch. Not for thee?

Fer. But such a ransom as cannot be paid.

Ch. So great?

Fer. Ay, even so great, that ye yourselves
Would not consent to share.

Ch. Tell us the sum.

Fer. 'Tis to surrender Ceuta to the Moor.
Now are ye silent.

Ch. We are flesh and blood.

Fer. Say ye?

Ch. The stones of Ceuta cannot bleed,
The walls of Ceuta would not pine as we.

Fer. Then take them for example: be as they:
Lament not, pine not.

Ch. Rank we now as stones?

Fer. Stones, but not Ceuta's stones; they if they bled

Would spout heroic blood: royally therewith
Were they baptised, ere they might wear the cross.
I was a babe then: but the nurse that rocked
My cradle sang it: How the youthful prince,
Edward my brother, led the assault and fought
With hundreds hand to hand: how in the ships,
Watching the combat, the old king himself
Could no more be restrained, but forth descending,
For envy of the fight, with agèd hands
Clambered upon the walls, and by his son
Dealt wary strokes of death: till o'er the heaps
Of his own slain, out of his robber nest
Sala ben Sala fled.

Ch. Long live the king!

Fer. Since that day hath the fame ceased? Hath not Ceuta
Been as Christ's tourney, where the nations
Have clapped their hands to see a few brave knights
Hold Africa at bay, and in the field
Conquer whole armies of the unbelievers?

Ch. Praised be God!

Fer. I made an oath to match
My brother's praise.

Ch. Alas! what fate withheld
God's favour from our arms?—We who set out
To do him honour, and to plant the cross

On Tangiers', as it stands on Ceuta's walls?—
The foe lay watching for us, like a lion
Descended from the mountains.
Fer. On that day
I led your battle; and when ye were taken,
I fled but to retrieve the day. I found
A second army; I sought out the foe,
And overcame him: and the furious Sala,
Faln in my hands, I feared not to set free
As herald of my triumph. I was here: I had come
Even to this castle, when behold, swarming
Innumerable from the hills around,
The horsemen of Morocco!
Ch. What of the army?
Fer. Led off in captive gangs to serve the Moor.
Ch. Alas for us and them. Thou canst not save.
We are all enslavèd, all undone.
Fer. Be so,
Tame, cagèd wills, the off-scourings of fortune,
Mere counters of disaster! I will not yield.
Ch. Yield, prince, for us, who left our homes so far
To serve under thy banner; whom thine arm
Hath led to slavery—O prince, set them free,
Whom thou hast bound.—Restore us. Pay the price.
Fer. Can ye forget?
Ch. Nay, we remember well

Estremadura, we remember Tagus,
The banks of Guadiana, and our homes
Among the vineyards; Ezla we remember,
Obidos and Alenquer, where the trees
Shadow the village steps, and on the slopes
Our gardens bloom: where cold Montego laves
The fertile valleys 'mong the hills of Beira:
Our country we remember, and the voices
Of wives and children, by whose tears we pray,
Despise us not. See on our knees we bow,
And by God's love pray thee deliver us.

[*They all kneel to Ferdinand.*

Fer. Ah, wretched rebels! hath a little hardship
Melted the metal from you? I see ye are dross
Quite to the bottom. These hands that ye raise
Should have smote down the foe. Being as ye are,
How took ye upon you to defend the cross?
Doth not the shame of capture and defeat
Suffice, but ye must kneel to beg the addition
Of treason and betrayal, to deliver
Your worthless bodies from the pains that ye
Have thousandfold deserved? My brethren are ye?
Nay, I'll not look upon you. [*Turns away.*

Re-enter Almeh and Zapel.

Al. Lo, what is this?

Ch. O gracious kind princess,
Plead for us now.
Al. What would ye?
Fer. Noble lady,
I have a title to thy heart's compassion
Greater than these my countrymen, whose woes
Have moved thy spirit; and by that kindness in thee,
As by that beauty,—may I use the name
Of what I only worship,—I beseech thee
Hear them not speak, lest thou misjudge me much.
Al. Rise, friends: ere I can help you, I must know
What boon ye sue for.
Fer. Not so: lest thou add
To theirs thy prayer, too strong to be denied.
Al. What fear'st thou that my voice might win for them?
Fer. Ask not of them nor me.
Al. Thou must dissuade
My pity, or meet it where 'tis first engaged.
Fer. Then hear the truth from me. They vainly beg
Their liberty.
Al. From thee?
Fer. Ay, lady.
Al. How!
For this I too was lately on my knees;
But that was to the king. What power hast thou

To grant this; or, being able, why deniest?
Fer. They think at least that they would share my freedom,
If I went forth: wherefore they urge me do
For them the thing I will not for myself.
Al. And what is that?
Fer. Thy father hath appointed
The town of Ceuta for my ransom, lady.
Al. And that lies then within thy power to grant?
Fer. So far as 'tis within the power of him
Who scorns base actions to commit the basest.
Al. My sire, prince, hath a right and titled claim.
Fer. Christ hath erased all titles with his cross;
And by that sign reclaims the world he made.
Al. I know, prince, thou art generous; for thou gavest
Life to thine enemy: and for that gift
I am thy friend. 'Tis for thyself I plead.
The king hath nothing nearer to his heart
Than this possession: 'tis thy life's condition.
Yield where thou must.
Fer. I hold my life as nought.
Al. Then, prince, tho' not for these, nor for thyself
Thou wilt be bent, nor to my sire wilt yield;
Yet for the sake of holy peace submit;
For pity of all our people and thine own,

Whom pride will slay: think of the myriad wounds
Softness may staunch; and how kings have no honour
Above the keeping of their folk in peace.
Fer. Is't in thy creed man shall buy peace of heaven
By selling honour? O nay. Let the king
But take my life, and count my blood enough
To be one slave's redemption; there were then
No cause to kneel. Yea, wouldst thou shew me kindness,
Make this thy prayer. Go back unto thy sire,
And sue that he will graciously, as the exchange
For these men's freedom, kill me, or in their pit
Bury me alive.
Al. Alas, alas!
Fer. If now my words in pleading for myself
Have hurt thee, lady, forgive them: nay, weep not.
Until I saw thy pity for my sake,
I had no woe to bear.
Al. And woe it is
To see such suffering wrought by man on man,
And seek to heal it with a woman's words.
Fer. Lady, I need not pity: there's no fortune
I have not heart for.
Al. Now I see these men
Have gentler hearts than thou: they gave me comfort
Receiving my compassion; thou'rt too proud.

Fer. For I was shamed seeing a woman weep
Vainly for what I suffer without tears.
Al. I too am bred to shows.—Prince: I was sent
To fetch thee to the house. Attend the summons.
My father sits to dinner, and enquires
Wherefore thou tarriest. Of thy courtesy
Play our good guest with freedom; for the king
Will use no more constraint, than as thy health
And princely state require.
Fer. I will obey thee.
Al. And not my father?
Fer. Him, lady, perforce;
But thee most cheerfully. To thee no less
Am I a captive.

[*Exeunt Almeh and Ferdinand and Zapel.*

CHORUS. (*The leader* (1) *speaks, answered by others.*)

Now see we hope, friends: God hath sent
His best and nearest messenger
For our deliverance.—
Ch. Who is he?—
(1.) What, hast thou eyes, and couldst not see?—
Ch. If by thy hasty boast is meant
The sudden love upsprung
Between Christ's champion and the heathen maid,
'Tis withered on thy tongue.—

(1.) Heathen how call'st thou her,
Our pitying angel who hath been,
And from our mouth the word of truth received?—
Ch. Hath she believed?—
(1.) How shall not love persuade,
Now fallen to water God's own seed,
And in such soil?—
Ch. If she confess,
'Twill but the more our tyrant's anger feed
With tenfold torture to oppress,
Or end us all at a stroke.—
(1.) And so might be.
But hark ye what I whisper. Mark. Ye see
How in this garden one permitted hour
Each day we wander free . . .
Ch. Ay, ay—an hour a day—what should this mean?—
(1.) By their good help, secretly armed, I say . . .
Ch. What sayst thou? Armed!—go on.—
(1.) How easy 'twere to find
Occasion . . .
Ch. When the foe is gone to fight
Thou meanest?—
(1.) Ay, thou'rt right . . .
Ch. And so to overpower
The few men left behind.—

(1.) See ye—
Ch. Ay, ay. Well done!
Convert our high-walled prison to a fortress strong—
To Ceuta horse a courier—or all at night
Make our escape by flight.—
Each choosing a swift steed.—
Better await until they send
A rescue.—Nay, how long
Could we sustain the fight?
(1.) Now tell me, was I wrong
Speaking of hope?
Ch. Nay, nay.
We make thee leader.—Show the way
To bring this soon about.
(1.) Mark me. I say
This is no council-chamber, and I fear,
Unless we now make end,
Joy will exalt our voices to betray
Our hope, ere 'tis well founded. Let us return
Submissively to our pit, and as we go
Sing a strain full of woe,
That, reaching to the princess' ear,
May work upon her, that she yearn
To set us free. With step and voice I lead.
Follow.
Ch. We give thee heed.— [*Going, singing as they go.*

ACT · III

ALMEH.

O DELICATE air, inviting
The birth of the sun, to fire
The heavy glooms of the sea with silver laughter:
Ye sleepy flowers, that tire
In melting dreams of the day,
To splendour disregardful, with sloth awaking;
Rejoice, rejoice, alway;
But why are ye taking
My soul to follow you after,
To awake with you, and be joyful in your delighting?
Ay me!

Enter Zapel from the garden, with a basket of flowers.

ZAPEL.

Here are thy lilies.

Al. 'Tis enough of these;
I thank thee, Zapel. Now there grows a flower
Wild 'neath the castle walls, a yellow rose
It seems, of stubborn habit, branching low;

When walking on the ramparts I have seen it,
And wondered whence it drew its sustenance,
In scattered tufts upon the waste sea sand;
Go to the gate, and say I sent thee forth;
And pluck me blooms, and a young stem of it
That I may plant at home: if it should thrive,
It shall be proud I ever looked upon it.
Why dost thou laugh? Didst thou not hearken, girl?

Za. I heard thee well: Go forth, Zapel, thou saidst;
Go where thou wilt, so thou return not soon.
Now is the hour prince Ferdinand should come:
Lovers would be alone.

Al. Be sure of this;
'Tis my sole comfort to be rid of thee;
And when we are back in Fez, I will bestow thee
Upon another mistress.

Za. If 'tis Fez,
I care not. I'll commend me to the queen
That shall be of Morocco . . . why, thou goest
The way to spoil thy fortunes, and dost shame
The suit of a most high and worthy prince
By favouring the Christian.

Al. Favouring
Dar'st thou to say?

Za. I say but what I see.
The infidel is dazzled by thy beauty;

And if thou dost not love his flatteries,
How is it that thou art found so oft alone
Where he must walk? that now these three days past
At break of dawn, ere thou wast used to stir
Thou must go forth, because the moon is bright,
Or dwindling stars should be beheld, or flowers
Gathered in dew; and I, who must be roused
To bear thee company, am in haste dismissed,
Or sent on useless errands, while the prince
Steals in my place? If I should say 'twas love . . .

Al. Folly! what folly in thee. And if 'twere true,
Should I need thee to tell me?
Go fetch my yellow roses.

Za. And in time:
See here he comes.

Al. Begone.

Za. Ay, I must go.
(*Aside.*) But I can send another. [*Exit.*

Al. What is it I resent? that others see us
Is our life's evidence: loving as being
Needs this conviction.

Enter Ferdinand.

FERDINAND.

What, Almeh! thou'rt here?
Dost thou indeed await me?

Al. Didst thou think
I should play truant like an idle child,
Who when the clock has struck cannot be found,
And must be dragged to school?
Fer. O nay. But in this world,
Where all things move outside our reckoning,
To find the least desire hath come to pass
Will seem a miracle.
Al. What is thy desire?
What is the miracle?
Fer. O beauteous Almeh!
If I might call thee Christian!
Al. Nay, I know not:
But what I have learned makes me desire the name.
Fer. Now is the purpose of my expedition
Revealed: for this I sailed to Africa:
For this I was defeated, and for this
Brought captive here. 'Tis thou that art my prize.
Al. 'Twere a poor prize for so much war: but tell me,
How came it thou'rt a soldier?
Fer. Thou hast thought
My failure shames that title?
Al. Nay, I ask
How, being a Christian, thou professest arms.
Why hast thou come against us, with no plea

Save thy religion, and that happy gospel
Thou hast trampled on in coming, Peace on earth?
Fer. Too late to ask. When conscience, like an angel,
Stood in the way to bar my setting forth,
Zeal and ambition blinded me; tho' yet
Against the voice of them that urged me on
There lacked not prodigies of heaven to stay me.
For as we sailed from Lisbon, all the host
That lined the shore with banners and gay music,
Was changed before my eyes to funeral trains
Of black and weeping mourners, who with wails
And screams affrighted us. The sun in heaven
Turned to blood-red, and doleful mists of grey
Shut us in darkness, while the sucking ebb
Dragged us to doom. And here now that I stand
In the rebuke of judgment, I have no plea
Save that I suffer: unless thou be found
My unsought prize.
Al. Thou missest the conclusion,
Considering but thyself, not those thou hast wronged.
Thou must surrender Ceuta: 'tis a debt
To justice and to peace: my father's honour,
Thy duty towards thy wretched countrymen,
And thine own freedom—
Fer. Let no words between us

Be spoke in vain, as these words now must be.

Al. Were thy words true, my words were not in vain.

Fer. Lady, were Ceuta mine, had my sword won it,
Thy words might move, though not thy father's threats.

Al. I hear the gate: some one comes forth. I pray
Retire, ere we be seen. [*Exeunt r.*

Enter Sala and Tarudante.

SALA.

I owe him life, your highness, and would stake it
A thousand times upon his princely worth.
As are his manners, you shall find his honour.
I will go fetch him.

TARUDANTE.

Stay, I understand
Something, and know that now he is in the grounds
With the princess alone. Go if thou wilt.
Assure thyself: I need to see no more.

Sa. Await me here then while I go. I pray thee
Judge not so hastily.

Tar. I judge not hastily.

Sa. Then wait me here.

Tar. I wait for no man, Sala;
Save out of courtesy; in which I hope

I have not lacked hitherto.

Sa. You have rather set us
In everlasting debt.

Tar. Speak not of that.

Sa. Then mock not our repayment.

Tar. Look you, Sala;
I understand to seize a prize by force,
Or kindly take a gift, but not to sue.

Sa. Yet women must be wooed.

Tar. Ay, that's a game:
But if 'tis more than play, I've no mind for it.
Patch up the matter as you can. For me,
I cry To horse.

Sa. Wait but a moment longer;
I will fetch Ferdinand. (*Aside.*) To have two rivals,
Tho' both be princes, may be better yet
Than to have only one. [*Exit.*

Tar. By heaven, they trifle with me, and by waiting
I allow it; cherishing an idle softness
That fools me to take slights, yet cannot soothe
My pride to competition. Nay, nor would I
Rob grey-haired Sala of it, if he has dreamed
His heirs shall reign in Fez. . . But the infidel—
How should the general countenance him,—altho'
There be some tie of chivalry between them?
A riddle it is; a riddle I leave it. Now

To save engagèd honour I must feign
Some exigency. I will go warn my men
That they break camp at sunrise. In three days
All is forgotten. [*Exit.*

Re-enter Sala with Ferdinand.

Fer. He is not here.

Sa. 'Tis well.

Fer. What wouldst thou, Sala?

Sa. For thy safety, prince,
And for my honour both, accept the terms,
And go hence while thou mayst.

Fer. Now spare thy words;
For I am firm.

Sa. Then if thou close the door,
Thou must o'erleap the wall.

Fer. What mean'st thou?

Sa. Fly.
Feign sickness. I will let thee forth to-night.
Thou shalt be safe beyond pursuit to-morrow,
While yet 'tis thought thou keep'st thy chamber.

Fer. Nay.

Sa. As men will risk their lives to save their lives,
Risk thou thine honour now to save thine honour,—
Ay, and thy life. 'Tis looked for of no man
To make his tongue his executioner;
Nor any hath this right, to bind his brother

To die when it shall please him.

Fer. O honest Sala,
We wrong thee much in Spain: there art thou deemed
A heartless soldier; not a bloody tale
That would pass current, but usurps thy name:
Men curse by thee.

Sa. I pray you now return,
And disabuse your friends.

Fer. Ay, that and more
When I return.

Sa. Thou never wilt return,
Unless thou fly at once.

Fer. Tell me the worst.

Sa. What think you, should I slay you with these hands?

Fer. Thou, Sala! why?

Sa. I spake not empty words.

Fer. Their darkness is to me as emptiness.

Sa. By heaven, I would not now unseal my lips,
But I know him I speak to, and my speech
Shall win thee. Hark, I have been for twenty years
Familiar with the king, one of his house;
I have known the princess Almeh from her cradle:
Her father's only child, she hath been to me
My single joy no less: from the first words
She lisped upon my knee, unto this day,

Her sayings and doings have been still the events
Which measured time to me: her childish ways,
Her growth, well-being, happiness, were mine,
Part of my life. Whene'er I have been away
On distant service, the same couriers
That carried my despatches to the king,
Returned to me with tidings of the child,
Writ for my use, the careful chronicle
Of prattle, with whatever pretty message
She had devised to send me: as she grew
I watched her, taught her, was her friend; and while
I trod in blood, and heard the mortal gasp
Of foes my scimitar struck down to hell,
I suffered nothing to approach my soul
But what might too be hers. Sala is stern,
Men say, and register my actions bluntly
To common qualities,—I serve my age
In such a tedious practice,—but in truth
Sala is gentle as the tend'rest plant
That noonday withers, or the night frosts pinch.
I tell thee what I would not dare tell any,
Lest he should smile at me, and I should slay him:
I tell it thee, knowing thou wilt not smile.
Now late it happed that I returned to Fez
After some longer absence than was wont;
And looking still to meet the child I left,

I found her not. She had made a dizzy flight
From prettiest to fairest. Slow-working time
Had leapt in a miracle: ere one could say,
From being a child suddenly she was a woman,
Changed beyond hope, to me past hope unchanged.
Maybe thou hast never tasted, prince, this sorrow,
When fortune smiling upon those we love
Removes them from our reach—when we awake
To our small reckoning in the circumstance
We are grown to lean on.—Cursèd be the day
Whereon we met: or would thou hadst slain me there—
My wrongs are worse than death.

Fer. How! can it be?
Tell me but truth. Art thou my rival, Sala?
Thou art: thou art. Yet 'twas thyself deceived me.
Thou'st ever spoken of her as of a daughter.
Forgive me, Sala; thy familiarity
And thy years blinded me. If, ere I came
Her heart was thine, and I by pity's softness
Have stolen the passion that was thine before,
Now by mine honour I will do thy bidding:
If 'tis the only way, I'll fly to-night.
Thy word, and I will fly. Were ye betrothed?

Sa. Nay, prince . . .

Fer. Nay? . . . Yet if not betrothed, maybe

Almeh hath loved thee, shewn thee preference,
Some promise . . .

Sa. Nay.

Fer. Then, Sala, in plain words,
How have I wronged thee? what can be the cause
Why thou didst threat to kill me?

Sa. I said not that.

Fer. Esteem'st thou then a prince of Portugal
So much less than Morocco? . . .

Sa. Dream'st thou the king
Would wed his daughter to . . .

Fer. An infidel,
Thou'dst say.

Sa. Is't not impossible?

Fer. 'Twould seem
No miracle to me shouldst thou thyself
Turn Christian.

Sa. By Allah! Hush! here is the king. Begone,
Lest my goodwill to thee be more suspected
Than it deserve.

Fer. I'll speak with thee again. [*Exit.*

Sa. (*solus*). I have shot my best bolt forth, and missed my aim.

Enter King.

KING.

Sala, what dost thou here? I sent for thee.

Sa. No message, sire, hath reached me.

K. I am come myself
To find thee; I need thy counsel, and I desire
Thou wilt put off the manner of advisers,
Who affect disapprobation of whatever
Is done without their sanction; in which humour
Thou hast looked grudgingly upon the marriage
'Twixt Almeh and Morocco.

Sa. My dislike
Hath better ground.

K. Whate'er it be, I bid thee
Put thy dislike aside: the business threatens
To fail without our aid.

Sa. How so?

K. The prince
Hath been with us five days: 'tis now full time
He spoke his mind; and yet he hath said no word.

Sa. Well, sire?

K. The cause: I'll tell thee first my thoughts.

Sa. The fancy of a maid is as the air—
Light, uncontrollable.

K. What dream is this?
'Tis not her liking that I count. The day

That Tarudante asks her she is his:
'Tis that he doth not ask.—I have myself perceived
A melancholy habit that hath come
Upon my daughter of late, and grows apace.
I thought awhile 'twas love, but now I fear
'Tis a deep disaffection: such behaviour,
So foreign to her years, might well repel
So fine a lover.

Sa. That is not the cause.

K. I say it is. I have watched her with the prince
Now for two days, and marked in her behaviour
Indifference and abstraction.

Sa. And if 'tis so?

K. Find some device to drive these humours off.
Did I but know, could we discover, Sala,
What lies the nearest to her heart, a prompt
And unforeseen indulgence would restore
Her spirit to cheerfulness.

Sa. (*aside*). Now here is hope.
If I could work him to my purpose now.

K. What say'st thou?

Sa. Sire, the sufferings of the captives
First hurt your daughter's spirit. Would you heal it,
Release them.

K. Eh! Wellah! I think thou'rt right.
Twice hath she knelt before me for these men:

I had never thought of it.

Sa. (*aside*). Heaven give my tongue
Persuasion.

K. I'll do it, Sala: 'tis worth the price.

Sa. There is yet one captive whom you cannot free.

K. Who's he?

Sa. The prince.

K. He counts not with the rest.

Sa. Nay, since his wrong and claim stand above all.

K. Thou art pleading for thyself, Sala: thou knowest
I hold the prince for Ceuta.

Sa. So, sire; for never 1271
Will you hold Ceuta for the prince. You asked
My advice: you have it. Where my honour weighed not,
Nor my long service finds me any favour,
Suspect not I would use a lady's tears:
Tho' true it be, the grief that Almeh felt
Hath been tenfold increased, since the good prince
Who gave me life was asked to buy his own.

K. But if I free the rest and keep the prince?

Sa. A stinted favour brings no gladness. Yet 1280
You could not more, you cannot, nay you are pledged.

K. Hark, Sala: I care not if he live or die.
Did I not offer him his liberty
On a condition? Since to win Morocco

Is to have Ceuta, I may change my terms,
And use him for that purpose, tho' it stand
One remove from my object: and I see
How I can make a bargain. Fetch my daughter,
For the same day she marries Tarudante
The prince and all the captives shall be hers:
And she shall know it. Send her hither.

Sa. I go.

(*Aside.*) Yet the condition mars the gift for all.

[*Exit Sala.*

K. Nay, he shall not dissuade me. 'Twas good counsel
Slipped from him unawares; and tho' I swore
To keep the prince till he surrendered Ceuta,
That oath turned 'gainst myself I will cast o'er,
Making his liberty my tool; and what
Self-interest persuades I'll do with grace.—
That men are strong or weak, foolish or wise,
According to the judgment of their fellows,
Is doctrine for the multitude. For me
I would possess my wisdom as my health,
In verity, not semblance.

Re-enter Almeh.

Al. My father sent for me?

K. Come hither, Almeh.

I have news for thee.

Al. Good news?

K. Thou shalt say good.
Guess.

Al. There hath something happened?

K. Something shall be.

Al. Is it peace with Portugal?

K. Nay, not so far.

Al. Tell me.

K. The Christian captives.

Al. Dare I guess
They may go free?

K. 'Tis that.

Al. O kindest father,
Thou healest my heart, that hath the chief enlargement
In this deliverance. If they know it not,
May I go tell them?

K. Stay. There's one condition.
It lies with thee to fix the day.

Al. With me?
I say to-day.

K. Thou canst not say to-day.

Al. How soon?

K. 'Tis thus. I make their liberty
A gift to thee the day thou shalt be married
To Tarudante.

Al. Ah!

K. The smile that came
So quickly to thy face hath fled again.
Is the condition hard?

Al. 'Tis like denial.

K. Denial!

Al. To do the thing I never wished,
And if I wished lies not in me to do.

K. Thou dost not wish, sayst thou? It lies not in thee?

Al. 'Tis true I do not wish this marriage, sire.

K. Well, well. To wish to leave thy home and me
Were undesired: but to obey my will,
To trust thy welfare to my guidance, girl;
Not to oppose my dictates . . .

Al. Truly, father,
I have found as little occasion to oppose,
As I have power to stand against thy will.

K. I know it, child: but for that hold thee to blame:
Thou hast not wished: 'tis in thy power to wish.
Marriage thou dost not wish: but thou must wish
What is my will; which to make more thine own
I add this boon. Was't not thy chief desire?
Dost thou not thank me?

Al. Alas . . . .

K. 'Tis no small gift, the lives of fifty men

Al. Tell me, sire; with the captives dost thou reckon
Prince Ferdinand of Portugal?
K. I knew
Thou wouldst ask this, and am content to grant it.
See how I yield. I will go fetch thy lover: 1340
Be ready to receive him: what thou dost
Ruleth his happiness as well as mine,
And theirs whose life I give thee. Await him here.
[*Going.*
Al. Stay, father, stay!
K. Well, child!
Al. (*aside*). It cannot be:
I dare not tell—
K. What wouldst thou say?
Al. I know not.
I have not well understood; not yet considered.
K. What is there to consider?
Al. Dost thou promise
The Christian captives and prince Ferdinand
Shall all, the day I am married, be set free?
K. I do.
Al. And if I marry not Morocco, 1350
What is their fate?
K. They die; unless the prince
Surrender Ceuta to me.

Al. O sire, the prince
Spared Sala's life: thou owest as much to him:
Thou mayst not kill him.
K. See, if that's a scruple,
How thou mayst gratify thyself and Sala.
I put this in thy power. Canst not thou thank me,
And smile on Tarudante?
Al. I thank thee, sire.
If I seemed not to thank thee, 'twas the effect
Of suddenness, nothing but suddenness.
I am glad to do it.
K. I knew thou wouldst be glad.
I shall go fetch thy lover. I shall not grudge
These hogs for him. [*Exit.*
Al. Death, said he? He would slay him!
My gentlest prince! O bloody spirit of war,
That hast no ear where any pitiful plea
Might dare to knock.—Alas, my dismal blindness!
I am but as others are, selfish, O selfish,
That thought myself in converse with the skies;
So shamed, so small in spirit. What is my love,
My yesterday's desire, but death to him?
And what to me? What but an empty fancy
Nursed against reason? which I cling to now
In spite of duty. Duty . . . Ah, I remember
I had a childish fondness for that name,

Dreamed I would serve God willingly. But now,
Now 'tis mpossible . . . Now if I serve,
I do his bidding with unwilling will;
Yet must I do it.

Re-enter Ferdinand.

Fer. Princess, I come to beg . . . Alas! thy sorrow
Shews me a greater care.
Al. Nay; ask thy wish.
Fer. 'Tis changed to learn thy grief, and why that brightness,
That shone to cheer my life, now clouds with rain.
Al. Each hath his private grief, prince: why should I
Be wondered at, or questioned of my tears?
Enough the world is sad, and I am sad.
Fer. A twofold error, lady: the world is gay,
And thou art half its splendour. When I first
Beheld thee in this earthly paradise,
What wondrous jewels, thought I, God hath strewn
About the world, which in our count of it
Stand out of reckoning, being unseen.
Al. And then
If I was light of spirit, I knew not why;
Now,—but thou speakest of some favour: tell me.
Fer. Since my request is guilty of my coming,—

'Twas for my countrymen: to-day the gate
Hath not been opened to them.
Al. I am happy, prince,
Their woes are ended. Ere thou camest hither
The king was here; and in his kindest mood
Granted their liberty.
Fer. Thy prayers, lady,
Must be the sweetest incense that from earth
Perfumes God's mercy-seat: He bends to soften
The heart that thou beseechest.
Al. Stay, 'tis thus.
They are given to me to grace my bridal.
Fer. How!
Thy bridal?
Al. When I am married where thou knowest,
The prisoners shall be mine.
Fer. And when thy bridal?
Al. Whene'er Morocco, that is come to woo me,
Shall ask to wed me.
Fer. Lady, forbid me not.
It needs no skill to read thy sorrow now:
For coldly speak'st thou, and with trembling tongue—
Al. What think'st thou then?
Fer. Forgive me, if I am bold:
Thou dost not love him thou art bid to wed.
Al. That were my blame, since he is worthy of me.

Fer. Nay, 'tis not that: but if I have guessed the truth,
O if thou hast now consented, and wilt sell
Thyself for pity of these wretched men,
Now I forbid the odious sacrifice.
Perchance thou thinkest that these many souls
Against thy single welfare, must make up
The greater stake. Not so; they're mites and scraps
'Gainst thy immeasurable worth: a thousand
Would not complete the thousandth part of thee;
And were I where their base ill-natured wills
Obey me, thou shouldst tell them for thy slaves
As hairs upon thy head. 'Twere heavy tidings
That thou shouldst love Morocco, and being so far
Won to the faith, shouldst willingly renounce
Thy saintly liberty: but rather so,
'Than that by one thou lov'st not, against thy will,
Thou shouldst be harnessed 'neath the common yoke.
Al. My will is nothing, prince, and if Morocco
Already hath three wives, I shall rank first.
Fer. Monstrous! Wilt thou stoop to such servile change?
Al. Unwittingly thou speak'st against thyself.
Fer. Alas! what words have injured me with thee?
Al. None: but thy fate is knit in one with theirs,
Whose happiness thou bidst me now not weigh.

Fer. On that day shall I too be given to thee?
Al. Betray me not, I pray.
Fer. O Mockery!
What hast thou done?
Al. The best for thee.
Fer. For me!
O nay. And for thyself?
Al. Think not of me.
Fer. Not think of thee! My very thoughts of heaven
Are thoughts of thee. 'Tis now so short a time,
Nor have I on my part any desert
To challenge favour at thy gracious hands,
That I should dare to speak: nor any words
That man hath e'er invented, to combine
In sentences that mock mortality,
Are proud enough to tell thee; therefore—
I say in plainest speech, Almeh, I love thee.
For thy goodwill I thank thee: but my fate,
If thou dost love me not, or art another's,—
Life or death, misery and imprisonment,
Slavery or freedom, count as little with me,
As when I shall be dead, where I may lie.
Say, if thou canst, thou lov'st me: and if not,
Thou shalt at least have heard, and I have told,
My tale; how to prince Ferdinand of Portugal
Thou didst appear the only being on earth

Worth his devotion; that for thy possessing
He would have given all else, to live with thee
As Christians use, in state of man and wife,
Which God hath blessed.

Al. No more, I pray no more.
The graveyard ghosts are not so waste and dead
As is thy phantom picture.

Fer. Dost thou love me?

Al. Why ask me? Yet be this an hour of truth,
Tho' all time lie. I love thee, Ferdinand,
Even as thou lovest me; would be thy wife,
To live alone with thee as Christians use.

Fer. Almeh! Weep not. Fear nothing, if thou art mine.

Al. I am nought that is not thine: only thy hope I cannot share.

Fer. How canst thou love and fear?
See, I can teach thee how to trust in love
Now with this kiss.

Re-enter King, Tarudante, and Sala.

Al. (*seeing K.*). Away! My father! my father!

K. What see I?

Sa. (*aside*). Now could I slay him.

K. (*to Tar.*). These white-faced Christians
Have most uncultured manners. (*To F.*) By my soul,

Prince Ferdinand, thou usest thy liberty
With small restraint. (*To S.*) Sala, conduct the prince
Into the dungeon tower: see him there locked.
Tar. (*aside*). 'Tis as I thought.
K. Begone, I say: my passion
Brooks not his presence. [*Exit Sala with Ferdinand.*
Tar. (*aside*). But what word for her,
The greater culprit?
K. (*to Al.*). As for thee, my daughter,
Retire thou too. Thy blush cannot be cured
But by this felon's punishment. Moreover,
Thou dost not well to walk even in these grounds
Unveiled without attendant. [*Exit Almeh.*
Tar. (*aside*). 'Tis well said,
Without attendant. (*To K.*) With us, your majesty,
The women all go veiled.
K. And so with us
The custom is approved, and general.
But license hath been granted to my daughter
And her attendants, when within the walls.
Nor wilt thou find her modesty is touched
By such concession. As for Ferdinand,
Thou shalt decree his punishment.
Tar. Nay, sire;
I shall not ask that. I have here a letter
Writ by my father, urging my return:

He needs my troops. I look for your permission
To take my leave to-night. As for the matter
Which brought me here, the services already
Rendered your majesty have given me
Much pleasure, as the recital will my father,
And should confirm our friendship. I confess
'Tis disappointment to me that the league
Cannot be knit by marriage, and to have seen
The princess hath much sharpened my regret.
Could she have loved me, I had held myself
Not so unworthy of her grace.

K. Stay, stay.
Pray misinterpret not this fool's presumption
As her consent.

Tar. O nay.

K. I see thou'rt wronged.
I bear thee no ill-will for thy resentment:
I should feel shame for thee wert thou not shamed:
But all shall be atoned for: the unbeliever
Shall pay full penalty. Thou shalt decree it.

Tar. Might that rest with me, I'd be quit of him;
Deal courteously, and send him home to Spain
To wive among his kin.

K. Be not so hasty.
Make not so much of this. I promise thee
All shall be well. Stay, prince, and Ferdinand

Shall lose his head this very day.

Tar. Your majesty
Mistakes me; I cannot sue. My troops are warned.

K. Cannot I stay thee? Now, by God, ill done.
I am wronged, wronged.

Tar. Farewell, sire: in such a soreness
Few words are wisest. What Allah forbids
Must be renounced. 'Tis of necessity
I now depart. Yet should you need me again,
Send, and I come. God's peace be with you. [*Exit.*

K. He is gone—
Incredible! Consenting: I could not gloss it:
Before my eyes, the eyes of Africa.
Is this her secret? this her melancholy
That cannot love? Treachery and apostasy!
Or that sick passion is it, which some have suffered
For things strange and detestable. I will see her:
She shall renounce it.—Hola! (*Calling.*) Ho! within—
No cure but that: immediate disavowal,
Ere 'tis too late. O shame! (*Calls.*) Ho there, within!

Enter Servant.

(*To servant.*) Give word that the princess attend me here. [*Exit servant.*
That devil knows; he looked as if he knew.
And Sala knew it. 'Twas for this he urged

The villain's liberty. He shall go free . . .
To hell . . . and I will grant such liberty
To all who have seen him. There's one hiding-place
Where I may stow dishonour. But for her,
My daughter; if yet perchance there is any spot
In all her heart untainted by this shame
Which I may reach, that natural piety
May feel my yearning sorrow . . . Tenderly,

Re-enter Almeh.

Tenderly must I work. Lo, where she comes,
Her shameful head bowed down with consciousness.
Come, Almeh, come; come nearer. See:
Thy tender grace, thy beauty's perfect flower,
The vesture of thy being; all thy motions,
Thoughts, and imaginations, thy desires,
Fancies, and dreams; whate'er from day to day
Thou art, and callst thyself, what is it all
But part of me? Art thou the beauteous branch,
I am the gnarlèd trunk that bore and bears thee;
The root that feeds. I call thee not to judgment;
Only to save what most I prize, thy name,
And mine: there's one way that can be: Morocco
Hath taken his leave: before he leave must thou
Beg him to see thy injury avenged,
And for thine honour's sake must on thy knees

Bid me revenge it. If on the same day
The Christian prince insulted thee he die,
And die at thy request, before the eyes
That saw thy shame, ere busy tongues can tell
A tale in the ear, such speedy penalty
Will fright the scandal to a tale of terror,
And save our name. Withal he is a prince,
And that a prince should die may well atone.
What sayst thou, child?

Al. Bid me not speak.

K. Thy tears
And sobs I cannot read. I bid thee speak.

Al. O father!

K. Speak!

Al. Thy words, recall thy words.

K. What words?

Al. Thy words of blood.

K. Ah, Almeh! Almeh!
Art thou my daughter?

Al. O sire, on my knees
I beg.

K. Well, what?

Al. His life! his life!

K. Ah, traitress.

Al. Was not thy first condition hard enough,
To save prince Ferdinand that I should marry

Another? and I consented: but when now
Thou knowest I love him . . .
K. Love him. Thou confessest!
Al. I hid it from thee but to save his life;
Now I avow it to save him. If thou'rt wronged,
'Tis I have wronged thee: so if one must die
Let it be me.
K. Then perish all of us.
Al. Nay, why, when peace hath such a simple way,
When kindness would cure all? If thou wouldst see
How noble he is, how true . . .
K. Silence! speak not
What thou hast dared to think, lest I should curse thee.
I in my house to see God's holy laws
Reversed; my blood contaminate abroad
With infidels! Fly quickly. What thou hast said
Will keep thee prisoned till thy heart is changed.
Go to thy chamber. I will send thee soon
Physic to cure thee. From my sight! Away,
Traitress, apostate.
Al. O father, by thy love . . .
K. Away! away!
Al. By all God's pity I pray thee:
For pity of me.
K. Begone, lest I should strike thee.

Al. Strike me, and I will bear it. I did the wrong.
Punish me and pardon. I only ask for him,
Take not his life.

K. The more thou pleadest for him,
The more I hate him.

Al. Heaven will soften thee.
Thou must relent. Thou wilt not slay us both.

K. Begone, I say. [*Exit Almeh.*
May all the plagues of hell
Torture these Christians evermore. I see
No safe revenge. Kill him? and the worst believed?
And he my hope of Ceuta? I cannot kill him.
It needs considerate action. Hola there. (*Calling.*)
I'll speak with Sala. Hola there, hola!

Enter Servant.

Bid Sala attend me here. [*Exit servant.*
And if he blame me,
Because I harked not to him at the first,
He will not thwart my resolution now,
When policy and revenge are bound together.
'Tis changed. The Christian now hath done a wrong,
For which his death is due: I have my plan:
I'll starve him till he yield. I'll force him to it
By chains and torture till his stubborn pride
Pay down his ransom humbly.

Re-enter Sala.

Sa. Peace be with you.

K. The devil take thy mocking salutation.
I have three matters for thee: attend. The first
Is that Morocco leaves us, and with him
Our army is gone; whereon the second follows:
Thou must send forth with speed to all the towns
To levy succours; and thy forces here, 1621
Disordered in the war, visit thyself,
Reform, and make report. The third is this,
My will concerning Ferdinand,—and let that
Be first in thine attention;—'tis his death.
My hospitality which he hath wronged,
I now withhold . . . to death—thou understandest?
And more, 'tis death to any that shall give him
A crust or drop of water: and I will change
His entertainment. Set him in the stables 1630
To serve the grooms: put chains upon his feet:
Appoint a guard to enforce his tasks, and make
Mouleh their serjeant. For the execution
I hold thee liable. Let not his life
Outdrag three days. But hark: in spite of vengeance,
And in remembrance of his claim on thee,
He may go quit upon the old condition,
Ceuta:—thou understandest? Go tell him this,
The only hope my clemency allows,

But of my provocation not a word.
Be thou in time prepared to clear thyself
Of having known this mischief and concealed it.

Sa. My liege . . .

K. Begone and do my will. Thy words
Save to persuade the prince. Speak not to me.
It angers me to see thee. Go. I have done.

[*Exit Sala.*

Three days I said; three days. Within that time,
Unless I have my town, I'll be revenged.

ACT · IV

ZAPEL and SALA, meeting.

SALA.

WHAT tidings, Zapel? I have been all day away,
And had no word.

ZAPEL.

There's none of good to tell.
She hath neither ate nor slept.
Sa. Will she not eat? 1650
Za. Nothing.
Sa. 'Tis the third day.
Za. Nor will she sleep.
She fights 'gainst sleep, as if 'twere death. Like one
That must keep watch against its soft approaches,
Sitting upon her couch with head inclined
She mourneth to herself, and 'twixt her sighs
What words may be distinguished overlook
Her own distress, and squander their laments
Upon an unknown sorrow, which she says
Enwraps the world. Or sometimes she will sing

The melancholy strains which she hath heard
The Christian captives use.

Sa. 'Tis a brain-sickness:
Miserable.

Za. And ever, when I have tried to cheer her,
Hath she rebuked me, as she is wont; but gently,
And bid me leave her: Then to meet her humour
I have gone, but made occasion to return,
Bringing such simple food as best she likes,
Freshly prepared to tempt her; and with tears
I pray her but to taste: yet she endures,
And saith, 'I thank thee, Zapel: tho' I eat not,
Thy skill is not misspent stretching the rack
That proves my constancy. I prithee, girl,
Set fresh and fresh before me.' Hearing this
I weep for pity: but she saith, 'Be sure
I shall not taste thy dishes, till one eat
Who is now denied.'

Sa. Doth she not speak his name?

Za. Rarely and reverently, as a name of God.
Then I am sent to learn the last; if yet
He lives, and whether he hath spoke of her. This morn,
As I returned from such unhappy quest,
She gave me this: See, 'tis a letter for him...

[*Shewing letter.*

Sa. Thou darest!

Za. O sir, the piteous prayer she made,
Kneeling and clasping me about the knees,
Went to my heart. But now I have it I fear
To have broke the king's command. I prithee take it.
Sa. Give 't me. [*Takes.*
Za. To see her thus, Allah forgive me,
I wish well to the infidel. What word
Shall I take back?
Sa. Say truth. I will deliver it.
And tell her prince Enrique is returned:
He is camped a league away, and in such force
As makes me hope I may persuade the king
To yield to his demand. Since there's this hope,
Bid her preserve her strength bravely, nor thus
Prejudge God's will. His blessing aid thy words.
[*Exit Zapel.*
I said there's hope. 'Twas hope that bade me lie,
For none I see. And this is misery,
To cherish consolations, and be happy
Doing the loathèd thing. Am I content
To bear a letter of Almeh's to her lover?
Allah is great. My best desire is only
To save her,—my one hope that the prince should yield:
And no persuasion but her love will move him.
This letter will entreat him; I must carry it.

Enter King.

KING.

Sala, make haste: a herald from Enrique.
This to me: Read. Edward of Portugal
Is dead. His eldest son being but a babe,
A regency now governs, and the rulers
Are prince Enrique and this Ferdinand.
The other I cannot read, and 'tis addressed
To Ferdinand. I doubt not that it urges
Acceptance of my terms and quick return.
Sa. I pray it be so. Is it your pleasure, sire,
To speak with Ferdinand?
K. Ay, fetch him hither.
The dog being master now may change his mind.
Sa. And will you see him in his shameful dress?
K. Nay, that is past:—his own, and with his sword.
Sa. And his despatch; shall I not bear it to him?
K. Ay. Give it him; take it. Stay. (*Aside.*) I never know
What it may say. Better to try him first
Without its knowledge. Should I fail 'twere time
To use it then. (*To Sala.*) Give it me. I'll keep it back.
What is this other paper? [*Seeing A.'s letter.*
Sa. I pray, my liege,
Ask not.

K. I'll know.

Sa. I pray you trust me, sire.

K. Trust thee! what means this?

Sa. 'Tis a forbidden paper.
'Twould anger you to see it.

K. By heaven, I am angered
Before I see it. What is it thou wouldst hide?

Sa. It is a letter which I have intercepted
From Almeh to the prince. If you have pity
On your own flesh, beseech you, let me use it
As I judge fit.

K. And well discovered now.
By God, wouldst thou play carrier? Give it to me.

Sa. It hath not been five minutes in my hands.

K. And shall not be. (*Takes.*) Go fetch the prince.

Sa. If you should read it, sire, and find therein
Messages of such softness as might melt
The stubbornness of Ferdinand, I pray you,
For her sweet sake that writ it, let it go
And do its errand.

K. Go thou and do thine. [*Exit Sala.*
Will he too plot against me! Let us see
What style she dares. *Thy death, O my beloved,*
Already is avenged.—O very tenderly,
And most determined.—*Willingly I suffer*
What pains of thine I may. 'Tis all my joy

To have taken neither food nor rest
Since first thou wert deprived; nor will I take
Till thou be respited.—Why this might move him.
Oh, if thou diest!—Ah, great heavens,
What read I here? Now I see all. Baptized!
Baptized in secret by thy countrymen.
Baptized! Then let her perish. She is dead.
I cast her off. *Till now I hid this from thee,*
Doubting my worthiness.—He doth not know it.
He shall not know. None shall know. We will die.
I will slay all. I will go down to the grave,
And plead my cause before the holy angels,
Whether it may be permitted for a princess,
Against her father and faith . . .—Nay, is't not writ
There is there no vain discourse nor charge of sin,
But pleasure to the faithful? And I to die
With house and kingdom shamed! How would my crown
Shine 'mong the blessed caliphs, and the martyrs
Who fell in fight upon the road of God?
How would they look upon me,
If 'mong their moonbright scimitars I came,
My child's blood on my head? and she not there,
The fair flower of my life, the bud of grace,
Which my long-withering and widowed tree
Held to the face of heaven,

Now from my own trunk by my own hands torn.
Better the bole be split: heaven's lightning rend me:
All curses seize me. Almeh, thou must not die.

Re-enter Sala.

Sa. Prince Ferdinand will come.

K. Is he not here?

Sa. He comes.

K. Why look'st thou thus upon me, Sala?

Sa. Because, sire, thou'st dishonoured me, and slain
A noble warrior, who gave me life.

K. Slain him!

Sa. Ay, king: except thou raise the dead.
For tho' he breathes, 'tis with such failing gasps
As mastering death allows to his sure prey.

K. Thou art over-fearful; three days without food
Should make him weak and faint, but not to death.
Nay, I am determined now he shall not die.
Food will restore him. Set me here a table
With meat and drink: here in the garden set it,
And he shall eat at once. See it be done,
And quickly.

Sa. Sire, I obey: tho' 'tis too late. [*Exit.*

During the King's following speech, servants come in with table, etc., which they set down, and go out.

K. He must not die, since only by his life

I can save Almeh: and 'tis not too late.
The sight of food will tempt, the taste restore him:
He will yield. I have here too what will move him,
This letter; were he built of Atlas stone,
For Almeh's sake he must relent. I know,
I see what must be done. I can consent:
For such alliance with an ancient foe
Is honourable. Peace between the realms,
Happiness to both houses—bought may be
With sacrifice on my side—yet there's pride
On both to balance: and, this way refused,
'Tis hell and death. And he will thank me too.
He is brave and noble; and the stoutest foes
Are won to stoutest friendship. See, he comes.

Enter Fer., upborne between two Moorish soldiers.

Prince Ferdinand, our quarrel comes to end.
A message has arrived from prince Enrique.
Your brother Edward, that was king, is dead.
Wherefore the power which I have used on thee
I now relax. I have a gentler purpose
And a persuasion thou mayst guess; while thou,
Owing no loyalty but to thyself,
I am well assured wilt not be slow to meet me.
Sit with me first and eat: when thou'rt restored
We will compose these matters at our leisure:

Which done, and peace agreed, thou mayst return
In time to pay thy brother's memory
The sorrow it deserves: and in his place
Govern the Portuguese. See, there's thy life,
Thy strength and restoration. Sit and eat.

FERDINAND.

I feel no hunger, sire. The time is past
When thou couldst save my life.
K. Despair not.
Fer. Nay,
I do not know the word.
K. This is despair.
Come, sit and eat.
Fer. I say the wish is past.
K. Dost thou not then believe? See in this paper
Writ to thyself. (*Gives.*)
(*Aside.*) Life doth not tempt this man.
The call to rule his people yet may move him.
What readst thou now therein?
Fer. What thou hast said.
My brother Edward's soul rest in God's peace!
K. Is nought else in thy paper?
Fer. Ay, there's more.
I'd not conceal it. Prince Enrique writes,
If I return not to his camp to-night,

He comes himself in force to rescue me.

K. Trust not to such deliverance.

Fer. Nay, O king:

For cometh he at even or at morn,
To-morrow or to-day, he cometh late.
My eves and morns are passed, and my deliverance
Is nearer than his coming: yet for that,
Tho' I shall see him not when he doth come,
Not the less will he come; for so he saith.

K. Thou wilt not eat and live?

Fer. I thank thee, sire.

K. (*to attendants*). Set the prince in the chair, and all go out;
And send the guard within.

[*They obey. As they go out they take with them the sentinel from the pit gate. From this point the stage gradually begins to darken to end of act.*

Now, prince, we are left alone, eat what I give thee.

[*Puts food towards him.*

Fer. Why should I eat?

K. (*pouring*). Myself I pour the wine.
Drink with me. 'Tis thy life.

Fer. Why should I live?

K. Canst thou not guess? I'll tell thee then, and speak

Not as a foe. Thy will hath conquered mine;
And if I wronged thee, thou hast wronged me more.
Thou hast loved my daughter, and strangely won her love
Away from him whom for my son I had chosen,
And pillar of my house: thou hast driven away
My best ally, and left my kingdom naked:—
For this thy death would be but fair revenge.
And there's a secret cause why I should hate thee
Above all this: thou hast suborned my daughter:
She hath denied her faith. See there: (*gives letter*) see there,
What she hath writ. Read all. Seest thou not now?
'Tis true, she kills herself; she dies for thee.
Yet I'll forgive thee; tho' she is none of mine,
Apostate, disobedient.—Yet for her
I will forgive thee. See, 'tis for her sake
I pray thee eat.

Fer. Too late, 'twould be too late.

K. Say not too late: that word is death. Thou'rt brave.
Tho' not for me, yet for her sake I bid thee
Eat, drink, and live. So she may live, and thou—
The altitude of thrones may overlook
Such differences—I give her thee to wife.
Save us, I pray.

Fer. What hear I? wouldst thou then
Have given me in good faith Almeh to wife?
[*Makes motions towards food.*
K. And will. Ay, drink.
Fer. And Ceuta?
K. That is mine,
Her price.
Fer. (*thrusting things from him*). Ah, never.
K. Dost thou then refuse?
Fer. It cheereth death to spend my last breath thus.
K. Sittest thou there balanced 'twixt death and life,
Daintily making choice, and to my offer
Of all that God could grant thee, life and love,
Wrung from me by my sorrow, to my shame
Preferrest the Christian hell? O Infidel
Apostatizing dog, lest now thy mouth
Should find the power to gasp one broken speech
Of triumph over me, die at my hand.
Death shall not rob me of thy blood that's left.
[*Stabs Fer. across the table.*
Thus let thy brother find thee, if I fail
To send him also thither, where thou goest
To thine idolatrous and thieving sires. [*Exit.*

Enter from pit Chorus . . . Twilight.

CHORUS (*inter se*).

We come with laboured breath
Climbing from underground:—
In fear we creep and quake:—
What voice with furious sound,
Choking in wrath outspake
The names of blood and death?—
Who is here?—Look around.—
Hearken!—the broken moan
Of the ever-murmuring sea
Reaches my ear alone—
Come forward, ye may dare,
All is quite still and free.—
Ah, stay! behold him there,
That sitteth with his head
Upon his breast bent low—
The prince—the prince.—Forbear,
He sleepeth.—Nay, I fear,
Now may the truth strike dead
My terror—step thou near—
Gently.—Alas! woe, woe,
Woe, woe, woe, woe, he is dead.
He sits dead in his chair.

See at his heart, where yet
The murderous wound is wet.—

Our prince, our prince is dead—
They have slain him in their spite—
Ai, ai, ai, ai! Who now
Can save us? We are lost men, friends; we are lost—
And thou, who saidst that we should live to fight,
Where are thy arms? Didst thou not make a boast
That thou couldst see God's will?—We are quite forsaken,
Forgotten—(1.) Refrain, refrain. Can God forget?
Ch. Who could refrain? Alas! Hath not long woe
Crushed us so low?—Ah me! This is our pain.—
Now we deplore, alas!—Hell and despair!—
Now it is plain—O woe—we are no more
What once we were.—
(1.) Renew your courage, and devote your care
In solemn duty to the dead. Upraise
This noble corpse, and bear it to the bower;
Where, roofed by rose and jasmine, it may lie
Hid from the dews of swift descending night.
Take ye the feet, while I uplift the head,
And, grasping in the midst, ye, by his robe,
Bear him with slow accommodated step,
Where we may best dispose his limbs in peace.

[*Exeunt bearers with Fer.'s body to bower.*

Bearers. Alas, ah! noble prince,
What burial wilt thou have?

Far from where thy fathers lie,
In a heathen grave,
If grave they give thee at all.
Yet will thy country mourn;
And where victorious banners hang,
And hymns of Christian joy are sung,
Upraise thine empty tomb.

The others. We see our fate to-night. Thus shall we die.—
If thus they treated him, how shall we fare?—
Who bids us hope?—There is no hope, no hope:
I'll mask my thought no more.

Bearers re-enter from bower.

Ch. (I.) (*Who has Fer.'s letter and sword.*)
We are saved! we are saved!
Ch. How saved?—How so?—Tell us!—
(I.) This letter here.
Ch. What letter? say.
(I.) 'Tis from the prince Enrique.
Ch. Read! read!
(I.) 'Tis written to prince Ferdinand,
In our home speech. 'Twas in his grasp.
Ch. Read! read!
(I.) *Unless I have thee in my camp to-night,*
At morn I rescue thee.

Ch. Where is the camp?
(1.) A league hence to the west, he writes.
Ch. Alas!
Now they have slain his brother he will not come.—
Or, should he come, then in the siege he makes
Hunger will slay us all.—
(1.) Hark then to me. (*Stage darkens more.*)
He lying so near we may escape to him.
Ch. How shall we escape?—The guards upon the walls
Would see us.—They would send pursuit of horse
To cut us down.—
(1.) Not now. I said not now;
But later in darkest night.
Ch. And how to escape?
(1.) See here the prince's sword: with this in hand
To creep at midnight on our sentinel,
And slay him: then in darkness unperceived
To climb out o'er the wall.
Ch. Now sayst thou well.
(1.) Ye trust me now?
Ch. Ay, ay: if thou canst kill him.
(1.) Obey me, and I will lead you forth to-night.
Ch. What to do?
(1.) Hush ye! Our careless sentinel
Must soon return. Let him not see us here.

Begone, and some take up this food and wine,
Which we may share below to help our strength,
Hiding it 'neath your garments, as do I
The sword. With silent step troop to your shades.

[*Exeunt. As they go out the stage darkens quite.*

Re-enter K. and Sala, Left. There is light on them from the doorway, where they stand awhile.

K. Come forth and see!

Sa. The night hath wrapped thy deed
In fourfold darkness, that I should not see.

K. Thine eyes are straitened by the light within:
'Tis not so dark but we shall see anon.

Sa. I have loved thee, sire, so well: served thee so long . . .

K. What sayst thou?

Sa. I complain 'tis ill-repaid.
I am ill-repaid.

K. Sala!

Sa. Prince Ferdinand
Had given me life.

K. Stay. Why harbourest thou still
That grudge against me? Didst thou read her letter
I gave thee?

Sa. I did.

K. Thou didst: and canst not guess?

To save her life I yielded. I consented
To make this man my son. If he would live
And give up Ceuta, then I promised him
Almeh to wife.
Sa. What hear I?
K. When he refused,
I smote him through.
Sa. Refused!
K. There where he sits.
Sa. Can this be truth?
K. Ay, by the prophet. Ha!
He is gone.
Sa. Nay, none is here.
K. He hath yet found strength
To crawl away to die. 'Twill not be far.
Hark! heardst thou that? Again. [*Sighing heard.*
Sa. 'Twas some one sighed.
K. 'Twas that way, Sala: seek about.
Sa. The moon
Is up, but curtained by yon inky cloud,
Cannot shine forth. Let me go fetch a lantern.
K. Go, go. I will watch here. [*Exit Sala.*
Why should I fear?
I'll draw my sword. (*Calling.*) Ferdinand!
(*The sighing again.*) If thou canst speak, say where
thou art.

Answer me: Dost thou live? nay, sigh not so.
If yet thou livest I think I would abate. (*The sighing.*)
Now 'tis here, now 'tis there. Thank heaven, the moon:
(*Moon appears, and shews ghost of Ferdinand midway back.*)
I see him. He stands upright! Prince Ferdinand!
He walketh from me. Stay. I bid thee stand,—
By heaven, or I will slay thee. Villain, traitor!
[*Goes after ghost, makes a lunge at him, and ghost vanishes.*

Re-enter Sala.

Sa. What noise is that? What, sire: with thy sword drawn!

K. Didst thou not see him?

Sa. The Prince?

K. Ay.

Sa. Was it the prince
You spake with?

K. Ay, he lives.

Sa. And drew you upon him?

K. I called to him, Sala, and he made away: 2000
I followed him to stay him.

Sa. Thank God, he lives.
You did not strike him.

K. Nay, I struck him not.

Sa. 'Tis now like day. I see him nowhere, sire.

K. He hath hid himself. Look, Sala; search about.
I'll sit awhile. See; why the food is gone,
The food that he refused. He hath eaten all.
His weakness was but feigned.

Sa. I'll search about.

K. He stood and walked upright as if unhurt.
Yet how, unless he be a devil in flesh
Could he have 'scaped my mortal thrust?

Sa. (*in the arbour*). Alas!
He is here, he is dead.

K. How now! he is dead? [*Goes to arbour.*

Sa. (*coming out*). He is slain.
May heaven forgive thee! (*Aside.*) Murdered, most basely murdered,
And by this shifty, inconsiderate king.
Murdered for pride; because he would not take
The gift that was begrudged. Oh, Almeh, Almeh,
Thou hadst a noble and a gentle lover.

K. (*re-entering*). How came he there, Sala? How could I see him?
'Tis true he is dead and cold.

Sa. The Christian captives
Have caused our error. They have eaten the food,
And laid their prince's body in the bower:
It was their sighing that we heard, re-echoed.

From the deep pit.

K. By heaven,
I saw him, Sala, when the moon shone out:
He stood upright before me; while I spoke
He walked away.

Sa. 'Tis like your majesty
Hath been deluded by some airy vision
Bred in the troubled brain.

K. Nay, he was there.

Sa. The spirits of the dead have power to fix
The image of their presence in the place
Where life was robbed: there are a thousand stories
Of such frail apparitions.

Enter Messenger.

K. Who cometh here? 2031

MESSENGER.

Your majesty's command.

K. I know thee: speak.

Mess. The scouts returned report the Christians camped
To north of Alrah on the stream's left bank.
They do not hold the hill, and set no guard
Save on their front.

K. What numbers are they guessed?

Mess. At some four thousand: and prince Ferdinand
Is with them.

K. Who?

Mess. The scouts, your majesty,
Spake of prince Ferdinand's escape. They saw him
Ride at full speed into the Christian camp.

K. When saw they him?

Mess. At dusk.

K. It could not be.

Mess. They tell he galloped thro' their company.
They might have touched him. When they called his name
He took no heed. Some fired their pieces at him:
And some pursued: but he, as tho' his horse
Were winged, held on, nor ever turned his head,
And soon was out of reach.

K. Enough. Begone. [*Exit Messenger.*
I knew I had seen him, Sala: 'tis his spirit.
What is thy counsel?

Sa. Think no more of this.
Take a sufficient force within the walls:
The rest entrenched upon the hill without,
We must abide their coming on at dawn.

K. What is your force?

Sa. At most eight hundred men.

K. We are so o'ermatched, Sala, I shall not wait,

I shall assault their camp to-night. The darkness
Will hide our numbers: we will steal upon them.
Sa. I pray you, sire, be well advised. Consider,
If our small force be sundered in the darkness. . . .
K. The darkness is our friend. We know the ground.
Would I could blot the moon from heaven to-night.
My plan is fixed. Take thou five hundred men
And steal upon their rear, when battle joins
I with the rest will charge their front.
Sa. My duty
Bids me dissuade thee, ere I can obey.
K. I am brave to fight, Sala: but not to wait;
I will not wait an hour; nay, not an instant.
Thou wilt not move me. Not a word, I bid thee.
'Tis my last hope. Come, get thy men together:
If once they hear these hellish tales, we are lost.

ACT · V

Moonlight. ALMEH entering, followed by ZAPEL.

ZAPEL.

MY lady, I pray come back.
The night is sharp and cold: thou art not clad
To encounter its brisk sting.

ALMEH.

Nay, I must breathe.
I fell into a stifling slumber, Zapel;
And woke affrighted in a sweat of terror.

Za. For heaven's sake, lady, let thy spirit be soothed:
Thou killest thyself.

Al. Air, air! that from the thousand frozen founts
Of heaven art rained upon the drowsy earth,
And gathering keenness from the diamond ways
Of faery moonbeams visitest our world
To make renewal of its jaded life,
Breathe, breathe! 'Tis drunken with the stolen scents
Of sleeping pinks: heavy with kisses snatched
From roses, that in crowds of softest snow

Dream of the moon upon their blanchèd bowers.
I drink, I drink.

Za. If thou wilt tarry here,
Let me go fetch thy cloak.

Al. Where is my father?

Za. He is not in the castle.

Al. Where is Sala?
I must speak with him.

Za. They are both sallied forth
To assault the Christian camp.

Al. O then 'twas true
The noise I heard. They are fighting: 'twas the guns,
The shouts I heard. I thought 'twas in my ears.
—I have had strange visions, Zapel, these last days:
'Twere past belief what I have seen and heard.
I'll tell thee somewhat when I have time—O love,

If thou wouldst be my muse,
I would enchant the sun;
And steal the silken hues,
Whereof his light is spun:
And from the whispering way
Of the enarching air
Look with the dawn of day
Upon the countries fair.

Za. See, I will fetch thy cloak. [*Exit.*

Al. This is the reason

Why all's so quiet. Sweet peace, thou dost lie.
Men steal forth silently to kill: they creep,
That they may spring to murder. Who would think,
Gazing on this fair garden, as it lieth
Lulled by the moonlight and the solemn music
Made everlastingly by the grave sea,
That 'twas a hell of villany, a dungeon
Of death to its possessors. Death.—
Za. (*re-entering*). Here is thy cloak.
Al. Away! what dost thou think,
Zapel, of death? I'll tell thee. Nay, I promise
I've much to tell.—Thou'st heard, when one is dead,
An angel comes to him where he lies buried,
And bids him sit upright, and questions him
Of Islam and Mohammet. 'Tis not so.
For in my dream I saw the spirits of men
Stand to be judged: along the extended line
Of their vast crowd in heaven, that like the sea
Swayed in uncertain sheen upon the bounds
Of its immensity, nor yet for that
Trespassed too far upon the airy shores,
I gazed. The unclouded plain, whereon we stood,
Had no distinction from the air above,
Yet lacked not foothold to that host of spirits,
In all things like to men, save for the brightness
Of incorruptible life, which they gave forth.

Wondering at this I saw another marvel:
They were not clothed nor naked, but o'er each
A veil of quality or colour thrown
Shewed and distinguished them, with bickering glance
And gemlike fires, brighter or undiscerned.
As when the sun strikes on a sheet of foam
The whole is radiant, but the myriad globes
Are red or green or blue, with rainbow light
Caught in the gauzy texture of their coats,—
So differed they. Then, as I gazed, and saw
The host before me was of men, and I
In a like crowd of women stood apart,
The judgment, which had tarried in my thought,
Began: from out the opposèd line of men
Hundreds came singly to the open field
To take their sentence. There, as each stepped forth,
An angel met him, and from out our band
Beckoned a woman spirit, in whose joy
Or gloom his fate was written. Nought was spoken,
And they who from our squadron went to judge
Seemed, as the beckoning angel, passionless.
Woman and man, 'twas plain to all that saw
Which way the judgment went: if they were blessed,
A smile of glory from the air around them
Gathered upon their robes, and music sounded
To guide them forward: but to some it happed

That darkness settled on them. As a man
Who hears ill tidings wraps his cloak about him,
For grief, and shrouds his face, not to be seen;
So these by their own robes were swallowed up,
Which thinned to blackness and invisible darkness,
And were no more. Thus, while I wondered much
How two fates could be justly mixed in one,
Behold a man for whom the beckoning angel
Could find no answering woman, and I watched
What sentence his should be; when I myself
Was 'ware that I was called. A radiant spirit
Waited for me. I saw prince Ferdinand:—
Go tell him that I am here.

Za. I cannot, lady.

Al. The king and Sala are gone forth to fight:
There's none can know. Be not afraid. Obey.

Za. Alas! alas!

Al. Why dost thou stand and wail?

Za. Oh, I would serve thee; alas! but 'tis too late.

Al. Too late! how is't too late? If he were dead...

Za. Lady, bear up, I pray thee: for 'tis sure
Thy dream betrayed the truth.

Al. The truth! Alas!
Thou dost believe he is dead. Why, folly, think
How could I then be living? It could not be
That I, a feeble woman, full of faintings

And fears, were more enduring to outlast
The pangs of hunger than is he, a man
Whom hardship hath inured. Nay, while I live
He must be living.

Za. True it is he is dead.

Al. Thou art suborned: thou liest, thou dost. Confess.

Za. O nay.

Al. Now God have pity, or thou hast lied.
But thou hast lied. Didst thou not say the king
Sent for him forth? Didst thou not know the cause?
His brother has returned in force to take him.
Didst thou not see the dungeon door set wide?
And dar'st lie thus?

Za. (*aside*). Alas! what can I say?

(*To A.*) Here is a chair: I pray thee sit awhile,
I will go find him if I may.

Al. (*aside*). She lied.
Now she will fetch him. (*To Za.*) Where's the seat?

Za. Here, here.

Al. I am dizzy. Lead me to it. Go fetch the prince.

Za. Be comforted.

Al. Who hath sat here, I say?
Who hath sat here?

Za. Prithee be comforted.

Al. If this should be!

Za. Verily we are God's,
And unto Him return.
Al. Thou, thou! Begone.
Stay, Zapel, here: give me my cloak. I am cold.
Since I must die . . . think not this strange, I pray.
Bring food to me.
Za. Thank God. 'Tis the sea air
Hath quickened thee.
Al. Thinkst thou that vexèd monster
Hath any physic in his briny breath
For grief like mine?
Za. Lady, have better heart.
Why, thou must live. When once thy tears have fallen
Thou wilt be comforted.
Al. How should I weep?
Bid men weep who with their light-hearted sin
Make the world's misery: bid women weep
Who have been untrue to love and hope: but I,
Why should I weep? Begone: bring me food here.
Za. O that I am glad to do. Thank God for this.
[*Exit.*
Al. Why did she lie to me? Had they a plot
To make me think he is dead? Sala's my friend:
Sala sent word of hope: and if he lives
All may be saved. Nay, if he be not gone,
If yet he is in the castle, I may find him.

I'll give him food: we will steal forth together:
I have marked the way: and by the rocks of the shore
We may lie hid till we may reach the camp.
Now would I had kept my strength. Had I foreseen
This chance . . . There's none about. 'Tis not too
late. [*Noise of guns and fighting heard.*
I may dare call. Prince Ferdinand! Good heart,
What noise of battle. Pray God he be not there.
Against my sire now I pray God: I pray
Our men be driven back: yet not too soon.
Ferdinand! Ferdinand! Heaven grant there's none
To hear but he: and he will never hear me
Calling so fearfully, so faintly . . . Alas!
Better to seek him. Since he is not within,
He must be in this garden. He will have sought
Some shelter from the night.—Ah! the arbour . . .
there . . . [*Goes to arbour.*
Why, here. Wake, Ferdinand, wake! Come, 'tis I,
We may escape. Come. Nay, this cannot be.
Ah, God!—not this. Have pity; undo it, revoke;
O let thy hand for once undo.
Thou mightest, O Thou mightest. Ah, how cold
Oh! oh! he is murdered. Blood, his blood. 'Tis true.
Dead, and my dream, my fate, my love; 'tis done.
The end. Nay, God, as Thou art God, I trust Thee;
Take me with him. Here in this bower of death

I leave my body,—to this pitiless world
Of hate: and to thy peaceful shores of joy
I arise. O Ferdinand! me thou didst love.
Thou didst kiss, once . . . and these thy lips so cold
I kiss once more. I have no fear: I come.

[*Dies, falling on Ferdinand's body.*

Scuffling at back of stage, the guard runs forward, followed by the Chorus.

GUARD.

Some fiend hath pierced my back in the dark.

CHORUS.

Hey, fellow;
Silence, or I will slay thee. 'Tis well; he is dead.—
—Silently, silently.—Stay, stay. Which way?—
Here o'er the wall.—Hark thou, there's fighting there—
Our men have driven them back—we be too late.—
They will return—See where they climb the wall.

[*The shouting and firing are grown quite near, and some figures are seen through the trees scaling the wall from without.*

Ch. Who be they? See, they are swarming in the castle—
Our men, 'tis they. We are saved.—Make not too sure—

Best hide among the trees.—Hide, hide.—I'll take
The pagan's scimitar. [*They retire among trees.*

Enter left through the door a few Moorish soldiers, followed by the king, whom Enrique pursues.

SOLDIERS.

To the walls! to the walls!—
Too late—they are here.

ENRIQUE (to K.).

Thy sword. Give up thy sword.

KING.

Curse thee. I defy thee.

En. Thy sword, or I shall slay thee.

K. Never.
Ho! villains, rally. 'Tis the prince Enrique.
Kill him, and save me.

En. A rescue! a rescue!

K. Die,
Accursed infidel: but ere thou die . . . 2259
[*The soldiers set on Enrique with the king.*
This hand that slayeth thee, hath slain thy brother.

En. May God forgive thee if thou speak truth.

The Captives rush out from the trees and overpower the soldiers, the armed of them kill the king as he fights with Enrique.

Ch. A rescue!
Revenge—revenge.
K. Ha! treachery, ho! I am slain. [*Falls dead.*
En. Now who be ye?
Ch. Your own men, Prince; the captives.
En. Praised be God! ye have saved my life.

The Christian soldiers who were scaling the wall now come forward.

CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS.

Victory! victory!
The castle is taken.
En. Some go seize the towers.
Make speed: there may be men we know not of.
Take store of ammunition. [*Some run off.*

Enter more Christian soldiers by door (L.), *leading Sala prisoner.*

1st Soldier. Here is the general taken.
En. Sala ben Sala!
Sa. 'Tis I.
En. Give me thy sword.
Sa. I give it thee. [*Gives.*
En. Is the day ours?
Sa. The night is yours.
En. I pray,

What force is in the castle?

Sa. There is none.

Where is the king?

En. See thou. But where's my brother?

Sa. What! slain! the king!

En. I bade him render his sword:
But, when he saw I stood alone before him,
He made a rally of some beaten men
Who had fled with him; and so provoked his death
At the hands of his own prisoners, who ran
Upon him from the trees and cut him down.

Sa. By their hands fell he on this spot? 2280

En. 'Twas so.

Sa. O justest stroke of fate. 'Twas here he slew
The prince thy brother.

En. Tell me not, I pray,
That brag of his was true.

Sa. Alas, 'tis true.

En. My brother is dead! Ferdinand, Ferdinand!

Sa. Thy grief is as my shame.

En. Eternal shame.
He who spared thee: your royal prisoner,
Murdered.

Sa. Forbear. I'll lead thee where he lies.
See thou, he is in the bower.

En. (*approaching bower*). Ah! my brave brother!

Is thy proud spirit no more? But what is this?
Who is this woman that with eager arms
Embraceth his pale corpse?

Sa. (*pressing forward*). How sayst thou? Almeh.
Dead, dead.

En. Not so, she is warm.

Sa. Almeh. Sweet'st Almeh
O nay, she is dead. Ah, loveliest child of earth,
Is thy young bloom perished? Alas! alas!
Is this thy end? O miserable king,
What hast thou done?

CHORUS.

Alma is dead! Alma the fair!—
By love of Ferdinand whelmed in his fate.—
Lament her, O lament.

(1.) Joy of our heavy prison; *Ch.* Rescued too late—
Beauty too fair. (1.) Ah! surely in earth's prison...
Ch. A mortal as immortal made—
O unforeseen her end! Lament, lament!

(1.) Our woe is a storm, our hope the fringe of a shade,
The smile of a cloud by tempest rent.
Ch. A dawn in vain arisen.—
Alma is dead:
And we, to our superfluous prayer
Permitted still, our lives have won,—

Shaking in fear to be untimely undone,—
By long misdoing undone, unworthy who were;—
Saved by her, but saved too late.
Alma the fair,
Our Alma is dead.

En. What mean these words?

Sa. O prince,
The woes so suddenly befallen us here
Make a long tale. In brief, these whom thou seest
Embraced in death, were drawn in life together
By love's o'ermastering bond. Fate's stroke at me
Is that I live to tell it.

En. And was't for that
Thy king slew Ferdinand?

Sa. That was not all:
For Satan did persuade our thwarteous king
To make a godless bargain of their loves:
He would have given his daughter to the Prince
As Ceuta's price. When he refused, 'twas then
In pride and wrath he slew him.

En. Alas, my brother.
Inflexible in honour against thyself.
If but for a day thou hadst seemed to make consent,
All had been well.

Sa. Not well for him. He lived
And died with tongue as faithful as his soul.

Ch. He tells not all. Maybe he doth not know.
En. What's more to tell?
Ch. O sir, the princess here,
Who loved thy brother, learned the faith of us.
Her name is Alma. She is a Christian.
Sa. Yea,
'Tis true. I knew it. I would have hidden it from thee.
In this we are shamèd most. Prince Ferdinand
Conquered us here. His love and not his arms
Wove our disaster.
Chor. Love and faith have conquered.
Yet did his sword no less avenge his death.
See, prince, 'tis here, wet with the murderer's blood.
It savèd thee. For this we may rejoice:
And that we shall return.
En. Ye shall return. But now 'tis not an hour
For your rejoicing. Still your tongues. And, Sala,
It lies with thee in place of thy king dead
To treat with me. Here is thy sword: and thus
[*Giving.*
I wipe out debt; knowing that thou hast been
Generous and faithful to my hapless brother.
Let us make peace. Possess you what was yours
Before this war: I shall lead back my troops,
Nor vex your kingdom further. But I claim
The body of your princess, to inter

In Christian ground. One grave shall hold these lovers.

Sa. I would not separate them,—Heaven be my witness,—

But shouldst thou bury Almeh in some spot
Whereto I might not come, there's nothing left
For Sala on this earth but still to fight,
To gain possession of that holy tomb.

En. Fear not, for I will have their sepulchre
In Ceuta, and there to thee it shall be granted
To enter when thou wilt.

Sa. I loved her, prince, 2361
Before thy brother.

En. For myself, I vow
Ne'er to draw sword again. I count all days
That ever I spent in arms lost to my life.
Man's foe is ignorance: and the true soldier
May sit at home, and in retirement win
Kingdoms of knowledge; or to travel forth
And make discovery of earth's bounds, and learn
What nations of his fellows God hath set
In various countries; and by what safe roads 2370
They may knit peaceful commerce,—this is well,
And this hath been my choice. To shed man's blood
Brings but such ills on man as here ye see.
To save my brother and these Christian captives
I drew this sword, which thus I sheathe again?

For ever.

Ch. Thou wilt lead us home.

En. Peace! peace!
So much is saved. Now have ye mournful duty
Unto the dead. Bring ye these lovers in.
Let there be no more speech.

THE HUMOURS
OF
THE COURT

A COMEDY
IN THREE ACTS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

RICHARD . . *Duke of Milan* (*RICARDO*).
FREDERICK . . . . *secretary to Diana.*
Sir GREGORY . . . . *her major-domo.*
ST. NICHOLAS . *a courtier: suitor of Laura.*
TRISTRAM . . . *servant to Frederick.*
DIANA . . . . . *Countess of Belflor.*
LAURA . *her adopted sister: daughter to Gregory.*
FLORA . . . . . *maid to Diana.*

MARCELA, DOROTHY, KATHARINE, ROSE.
Maids.

Scene at Belflor, the residence of Diana.

Duration of time, three days: one to each Act.

HUMOURS OF THE COURT

ACT · I

Terrace before the Palace in the gardens of Belflor. Chairs set out. FREDERICK and RICARDO. TRISTRAM stands at a little distance, edging up to overhear.

FREDERICK.

YOUR secret's safe with me. I should be hurt
To think that there was any man on earth
Whom you could trust before me: and if my place
Here in the court can help you in your love,
Reckon upon me.

RICARDO.

I do, and hope some day
It may be in my good fortune to repay you
For such a favour.

F. *Favour! what a word*
To an old friend!

R. Nay, do not misconstrue me.

F. I own I am jealous, Richard, of the time
We have lived apart. There was a touch of fear
Mixed with my joy, when you broke in upon me
This morning, that the ten years had not spared me.
You find me changed? Say, doth my countenance
Wear the smug livery of the world?

R. Nay, friend;
I see no trace of that.

F. Then I remember
While I have played you have been within the mill:
And should I beat your coat there *must fly out*
Clouds of that *dusty, damned experience.*
Is not that so, your grace?

R. Go on: provoke me,
As you were wont.

F. The best remembrance, Richard,
Drowns in the world: and how should college days
Live in your memory as they do in mine?
'Tis no such lustre to your brilliant life

That we were comrades in Utopia;
That commonwealth of study and idleness,
Where sport, adventure, poetry and music
Were sauced with virgin-juice, a dish for gods.
R. As if I could forget!
F. Ay, but the spirit!
Think you we should have spoken of favours then?
In those days, Richard, we were used to think
Our teachers never had tasted life like ours;
Their staid propriety not logically
Deducible from essences as fresh
As angels of the sunrise. Shall the boys
Now say the same of us? By heaven you fright me:
The heart of manhood not to outlive a dog!
Then my old grudge against you.
R. What was that?
F. Your rank, which first drew us apart: but now
To meet again and have you in my debt
Is favour, by your leave, above repayment.
R. Still as proud as a peacock.
F. Could I do you a service.
But can I? See, I am here the Countess' secretary:
To make believe that you are a stranger to me
Were breach of trust.
R. But love makes tricks of crimes.
F. And if she has often seen you, how suppose

She will not know you?

R. 'Tis so long ago
That now in my disguise I have no fear.
You did not know me.

F. That was but your beard.

R. She hath not seen my beard: and 'tis impossible
She should suspect. She has treated me all along
With such disdain, that I, in love as I am,
Can scarce believe I venture; but—I am mad.
Nothing could keep me back. Hear all my story,
And then see how I am changed. 'Tis three years since
I saw her first at Rome. His Holiness
Gave a reception; I with some of the guests
Had strayed to view the galleries: suddenly
Out of a group before me—as if a Grace,
That lived in Rafael's brain to mock his hand,
Had stepped alive amongst us to rebuke
Our admiration of the fresco-stuff—
She turned and faced me.
Quick as I tell, I read my fate: I knew
What I was born for. Love's first ecstasy
Fooled me to a false security. That night
I wrote my passion; and by such presumption
Offended. My after patience met with scorn,
My importunity anger. I then desisted,

Trying if by absence I could work my cure.
Twelve months of trial bring me here to-day
With no hope left but this; that living near her
Her daily and familiar sight may blunt
My strained ideal passion; or if this
Quench not my fancy, it may serve to feed it
With something tangible and wholesomer
Than the day dreams of sick imagination.

F. I wish your cure; for, to say truth, the Countess
Is somewhat odd; as you will see yourself.

R. 'Tis for my cure I come.—Your servant there,
Might he not hear us?

F. (*to T.*). Tristram, just look round
If you can see the Countess.

TRISTRAM (*aside, going*).

What is there here now that I may not know?
That I am sent off? Who can this stranger be
So suddenly familiar with my master?
And comes here for his cure! Here to this haunt
Of women and lunatics! I'll find him out.

[*Exit singing to himself.*

F. My man is trusty and dull; devoted to me.

R. Excuse my caution: if we were overheard,—
If any guessed I were the Duke of Milan,
The venture which I make would be my ruin:.

All that I ask is secrecy. In this letter
I have written the Countess from myself, as Duke,
Recommendation of myself, the bearer,
As one Ricardo, begging for the same
Protection in her court for some few days.
Present me as a stranger: had I been such
You could not have refused.

F. Trust me to serve you:
But give your letter to the major-domo:
He attends her in the grounds; when they come by
I'll point him out. Better know nought of me.
What think you of the gardens?

R. All this hour
I have seemed in Paradise: and the fair prospect
Hath quieted my spirit: I think I sail
Into the windless haven of my life
To-day with happy omens: as the stir
And sleep-forbidding rattle of the journey
Was like my life till now. Here all is peace:
The still fresh air of this October morning,
With its resigning odours; the rich hues
Wherein the gay leaves revel to their fall;
The deep blue sky; the misty distances,
And splashing fountains; and I thought I heard
A magic service of meandering music
Threading the glades and stealing on the lawns.

Was I mistaken?

Re-enter Tristram unperceived; he stands by listening at back, as if waiting to be observed.

F. Nay, nay: there was music.
But why the jocund morn so dissolutely
Forestalls the faint and lulling charms of eve
I must explain. The Countess, whom you court,
Hath an unwholesome temper; what its nature
You, when you have seen it, will be as like to guess
As any other. She hath a restless spirit
And eager; and, what seems a sign of note,
Suffers from jealousy without a cause.
She is full of fancies; and hath, like a school-girl,
Drawn up a code of her peculiar notions,
Whereby, in place of commonsense and manners,
She rules her petty court with tyrannies
Of fine and forfeit. Then, although she lives
Pampered with luxury, and hath a sense
O'ergreedy of all that's offered, yet she takes
Her pleasure feverously, and pines in plenty.
'Tis a derangement:—the music which you heard
Was a diversion of my own contrivance
To pass the hour: the evil spirit within her
Yields most to music.

R. What you say is strange.

F. 'Tis unaccountable.

T. (*coming forward*). And so you'd say,
Knew you the cause.

Ber. Tristram!

R. (*aside*). Now damn this fellow.
(*To T.*) Perhaps you know it, sir?

T. I know it, yes:
But may not speak.

F. I bid you speak and show
My friend your wisdom.

T. To your secrets then
Add this. The Countess is in love.

R. and F. In love!

T. In love.

R. and F. With whom?

T. With whom . . .

R. But say with whom.

T. Stay. I will say with whom.
'Tis one to whom she dare not make avowal.

F. Say whom you mean.

T. Why, who but me!

F. The fool!
We wish not for your jests. Where is the Countess?

T. She is coming by the lake, sir.

F. Stand aside,
We have business now.

T. (*aside, going*). The fish bite very well:
I hooked them both at first cast of my fly.
(*Sings to himself.*)

F. 'Twould make us brothers, Richard.

R. Brothers?—how?

F. Having your secret, I must give you mine.
I also love a lady in the court,
Secretly too, as you, though with success;
And she is foster-sister to your lady.
The prudery with which the Countess rules
Drave us to hide our liking at the first;
And as that grew, deception still kept pace,
Enhancing the romance of our delight
With stolen intercourse. But these last days
A cloud hath risen: for the lady's father,
(That's the old major-domo, whom I spoke of,)
Hath been befooled to give his daughter away
To a wreathed ass, a cousin of the Countess,
Who hath herself approved the match. You find me
In this dilemma, whether to confess
My love for Laura,—that's the lady's name—
Braving the Countess' anger, or carry her off,
And after sue for favour. (*Music heard.*)
Hark! here they come.
I'll tell you more hereafter.

R. Ay, do: but now

Forget not me. (*Aside.*) By Jove, he has capped my story.—
Diana's sister too: and I entrapped
To aid in her elopement.

Enter Diana, Laura, Gregory, and St. Nicholas; with attendant musicians and singers, who go out when the music is done.

MUSIC.

Fire of heaven, whose starry arrow
Pierces the veil of timeless night:
Molten spheres, whose tempests narrow
Their floods to a beam of gentle light,
To charm with a moonray quenched from fire
The land of delight, the land of desire.

F. (*to R.*). That is the major-domo Gregory
With the white locks. Take him aside, he is deaf.

(*During next verse R. makes his way to G., and they are seen talking aside during the other dialogue.*)

Music continued—

Smile of love—a flower planted,
Sprung in the garden of joy that art:
Eyes that shine with a glow enchanted,
Whose spreading fires encircle my heart,
And warm with a noonray drenched in fire
My land of delight, my land of desire!

DIANA.

I envy much the melancholy spirit
Who wove that strain. The verses too were fetched
Out of a deeper well than common passion
Hath skill to draw from. Frederick, who is the poet
That I must love for this?

F. Love for my art
Hath made your ladyship too generous
Towards a most humble workman. 'Tis my own.

D. Ah me! what must it be to be a poet,
And in the abandoned humour that men take with,
To give forth! O 'tis godlike! but the music,—
'Tis that you excel in: it hath a melancholy
Which springs of love.

F. The whole world sprang of love;
And art is but the praise the creature makes
To the Creator.

D. True: and the best praise
Is but love's echo. I mean you love some lady.
She is very happy. Would I knew her name.

F. When I shall love a lady, and have means
To court her, you shall hear gay music.

D. Means!
Is she so mercenary?

F. Your ladyship
Must take this lady of your own creation

With all her faults. Love is a luxury
You may suspect in me when I have money
To spend in presents.

R. Whom you love I know not:
But whether it be a queen or peasant girl,
'Tis all one. Love exalteth above rank
Or wealth; yet in Love's ritual 'twere well wished
To express your homage fully. Ho, Sir Gregory!
Sir Gregory!

GREGORY.

Your ladyship!

D. Give Frederick
A hundred ducats at my household charge.

G. (*to F.*). What said my lady?

F. (*aside*). An open insult.

T. (*to G.*). Thou'rt to give my master
A hundred ducats for a wherewithal
To make his lady presents.

F. (*to T.*). Silence, idiot.

T. He heard not: you may lose the money.

G. My lady,
A gentleman from Milan. (*Presenting R.*)

D. (*half aside*[1]). Milan, say you?

[1] The half-asides in the play in the presence of Gregory are spoken either with indifference as to whether G. will hear, or with confidence that he will not.

I thought we had done with Milan.

R. Queen of Belflor,
This letter from the Duke explains my coming.

D. Welcome, sir, whencesoe'er: but if from Milan,
Bringst thou this letter, or did it bring thee?

R. I bring the letter, madam: and 'tis writ
But in my favour.

D. Good: on that assurance
I'll read. (*Opens letter.*)

(*F. has passed across to make way for G. and R., coming near Laura, front, side.*)

LAURA (*to F.*).

You have my glove?

F. Yes.

L. When I drop the other,
Exchange them secretly. 229

D. (*reading to audience*). *The bearer, my servant Ricardo, having hurt his challenger in a duel, I beg for him a few days' protection in your court, till some consequent rancour be appeased. Let my long silence and absence win for me this little grace.*
With reason and good courtesy asked. Ricardo,
Make your asylum here. Sir Gregory
Will tell you that such residence implies

certain restraints, in which we look to find
Compliance.

(*Laura drops a glove, which F. snatches up, and is seen by the audience to exchange for another.*)

NICHOLAS (*stepping forward between F. and L.*).

I pray thee, sir; nay sir, I pray.
My duty.

F. Is't thy glove?

N. Yes, when it falls.

F. How so? When heaven doth rain, it rains for all.
Thou shouldst have picked it up.

N. I ran to do so,
But thou anticipatedest me. I pray
Give 't me, that I restore it to my lady.

F. Claim not her gloves, sir, till her gloves are thine.
Now thou anticipatest.

N. Sir Gregory!
A question.

G. Eigh!

D. What is this, St. Nicholas?

N. I beg Sir Gregory judge 'twixt me and Frederick.
My lady Laura, having dropped her glove,
He picks it up, and would return it to her;
Which I forbid, claiming the privilege
As her accepted lover.

D. A mighty question.
Who can determine it?
T. That can I. The lady
Should drop the other, and let each have one.
D. St. Nicholas would claim both, Sir Solomon.
(*To F.*). Give me the glove. I thank you much; and now
I offer better matter for discussion:
The chairs were set on purpose. Let all be seated.
Laura, take back thy glove; and sit thou there.
You, Frederick, on my right. (*To R.*) 'Tis what I call
The Muses' matinée. These morning hours,
Which others waste, we may devote to wisdom,
And solve some learned question; as was done
In ancient Athens; where, as Plato shows,
Nothing was more admired than dialogues
In science and philosophy. I will hold
Such an assembly: we will each in turn
Make answer to the question I propose.
And that shall be of love. I'll question why
Love is called bitter-sweet.

DIANA

TRISTRAM Stands *LAURA*
FREDERICK *NICHOLAS*
GREGORY *RICHARD*

N. Now, by my heart,
A pretty question. May I speak the first?
D. In turn, in turn. Hark, if I put it thus,
What is love's chiefest pain? How think you, Frederick?
The speech lies with Ricardo, as our guest.
R. Am I to answer?
D. Ay, sir: you must tell
What, in your judgment, is love's chiefest pain.
R. 'Tis well, my lady, I am not one of those,
Who, when they would speak wisely, go about
To weigh their pros and cons; in doing which
They but confess their common thoughts are folly,
Which they must mask. I have a steady mind,
Which thinking cannot mend: and well I know
The greatest pain in love is when a man
Hath loved a lady most deservedly,
And been most undeservedly refused;
Yet, spite of her contempt, is silly-true,
And wastes his days. This is the pain of love;
Or if another can be shewn to match,
I forfeit claim to wisdom in such matters.
D. Very well said, sir, if your speech be taken
To include the parallel, the equal pain
Of any woman who thus loves a man.
What say you, Frederick?

F. Ricardo is in fault,
For love being not returned is but half love;
In which imperfect state love's pain or bliss
Cannot be known: to love and be beloved
Is the required condition. But when two hearts,
Encountering in this mortal maze, have knit
Their preordained espousals, and together
In moonlight meeting and sweet conference,
Signed the surrendering treaties of their love;
If fate, or circumstance, or other's will
Should then oppose them, and thrust in to sever
The new-spun cords with which they are bound; I say
This is the hardest pain that love can shew.

D. Ha! you speak logic; that love's perfect pain
Cannot exist but in love's perfect state.
Laura, 'tis thou to speak.

L. What shall I say?

D. Give thy opinion; or, in want of matter,
Be critical. A gloss may hit the mark
Where the text fails.

L. If Frederick has said well,
That love's pain is a pain of love returned,
The pain of love must come from being loved.

D. O, most adorable simplicity!
Before thy lover, too! St. Nicholas,
What wilt thou say?

N. Beshrew my science now,
If Lady Laura have not hit the mark.
'Tis vulgar error that would make distinction
'Twixt pain and joy; which are, as life and death,
Inseparables. The shadowed images
Cast on the wall of this memorial cave,
This earth, wherein we dwell, are things of nought,
But serving to mislead our darkling sense:
Nay health and strength are but the habitude
Of this delusion. Ask your ruddy clown
Of love; will he not tell you 'tis a pleasure
Which moves the plain heart of the natural man?
But to the poet, what is love to him?
'Tis like heaven's rainbow scarf, woven of all hues
Of pain and joy; an eagle and a snake
Struggling in the void and crystalline abysm
Of life and death. And love's pain, what is that?
I have compared it to a sunbeamed tear,
Whose single pearl broiders the marble lids
Of some tall Sphinx, that with impassive smile
Dreams o'er the desert; whence 'twas gathered up
Of earthly dew and the pale sparkle of stars,
To fall in silent lightning on the sands;
Which, at the touch magnifical, bloom forth
In irresistible fecundity.
Such is love's pain, as it hath lit on me;

And tinctured by it I would dream my day,
Nor count the sailing hour, but when night falls
Be closèd up, like a belated bee
In the pale lily of death.

D. Now you all hear!

R. (*aside*). Heavens! a belated bee!

D. Thy lover, Laura;
What say'st thou?

L. O beautiful.

D. And you, Ricardo?

R. Capital, capital!

D. Sir Gregory!
Sir Gregory!

G. Eigh.

D. 'Tis now thy turn to speak.

G. Pardon, your ladyship; but at the outset
I missed the question, and for lack of it
Have followed ill.

D. The question we discuss
Is this, What is the chiefest pain of love?

G. The chiefest what?

D. Pain.

G. Ah! the pain of love.

D. 'Tis now thy turn to speak.

G. Oh, is't my turn?
The chiefest pain of love; I am asked to say

What that is?

D. Yes.

G. Your ladyship knows well
You ask of one who has lived to study truth
From nature's only teacher;—without which
I would not speak. But since you have often heard
Your sainted mother tell from what sad cause
She made my Laura your adopted sister,
Saving my orphan in the only loss
That can befall a babe, its mother's care,
You know how by that loss there came to me
The chiefest pain of love; which can, I think,
But hap to wedded spirits, who have joyed
In mutual life: wherein, may heaven forgive me
If the remembrance of my joy awake
Sorrow with thankfulness, the balance being
So far on the good side, spite of the pain:
Yet if I speak of it now without more tears
Than ye can see, 'tis that the founts are dried:
Time hath not helped me otherwise. I pray
God, who is merciful, to shield all here
From like calamity.

F. I say Amen
To good Sir Gregory.

R. And amen for me.

Enter Flora to D.

D. What is it, Flora?

FLORA.

My lady, the merchant's come.

D. What merchant?

Fl. The Venetian with the silks
Your ladyship bespoke.

D. (*rising*). Do you hear, Laura?
Your stuffs at last. Our matinée, my friends,
Is interrupted, an important matter
Unfortunately calls me away. Come, Laura:
There'll scarce be time to get the silks made up
Before your wedding. Come and choose them with me.
St. Nicholas, we shall need thee too; 'tis nothing
Unless thine eye is pleased.

N. I dote on silks.
I love their fine prismatic cadences.
Yet these Venetian colours to my taste
Are over-saturate: I'd have them cast
With the Doge's ring in the sea. A good year's soaking
Would bring them down into that faded softness,
Which is a banquet to the cultured eye.

D. Ricardo, do you attend Sir Gregory,
And see your lodging. Come, St. Nicholas;

Come, Laura! [*Exit with Laura and St. Nicholas, Flora following.*

G. (*to R.*). I wait upon you, if it please you
To visit your apartments. Tell me pray
What men you bring. [*Exit with R. making signs.*

F. (*taking out the glove with the letter*). Thank heaven, now I may read.

(*Aside.*) What saith my love? what hope?

T. (*aside*). Another letter!
Whence got he this?

F. O blessed paper!

T. (*aside*). Watch him! 400

F. (*reading, away from T.*). *Dearest; all is lost. They mistake my hesitation for consent. My father has fixed the marriage for three days hence. I dared not say the truth. I know not what I said. My senses left me . . .*

(*Aloud.*) Death! death!

T. (*aside*). By Gemini, this is a nasty one.

F. (*reading as before*). *But be sure I never consented. If there is no other escape, I must fly. Come to-night to the garden. I will be at my window at eleven o'clock.* 410

(*Aloud.*) Thank God, thank God. I breathe again. I shall see thee to-night.

T. Pray, sir,

Is anything the matter?

F. Eh! ah! what said I?

T. That you were dead, and then alive again.

F. 'Tis true.

T. I quite believe it. And then you said
That you would see her to-night.

F. Pray mind your business, Tristram:
Pay more attention to what is said to you,
And less to what is not. Whom would you speak of?

T. I speak of no one, sir.

F. No more do I. [*Exit.*

T. My master's mad. If this is court life, I shall soon curse my birthday, like dutiful Job. 'Tis a madhouse. If there were any sense in anything that's said or done, I'd swear my life that the Countess was in love with my master, and he might have her for the asking. Yet who can tell what she means, when every one plays at being in love with somebody? 'Tis a fashion with them as catching as the measles. My constitution holds out, thank heaven. (*Sings.*)

The meads drink up the rain,
The kine eat up the grass,
And man feeds on the kine,
And love on man, alas.
So about and about! fa, la!

And there's a good light step to that tune, which I

think I can do as well as any I have seen. (*Dances and sings.*)

So about and about! fa, la!

So about and about! fa, *la*! etc.

Re-enter Flora, who watches him awhile and then laughs aloud.

Fl. Ha! ha! Well fancy, Tristram! dancing all alone!

T. Lack of company constrains a man to be alone; and as for dancing, 'tis the original sin Adam was born with. 'Twas seeing him dance alone provoked providence to send him a partner. 'Tis now the inheritance of lambs and such innocents: and wert thou not too depraved by a court life, I would ask thee to dance with me.

Fl. I depraved! I will dance with you.

T. Canst thou?

Fl. Ha! ha! About and about, fa, la! (*Dancing.*)

(*They dance to each other and then together; in and out among the chairs.*)

O softly, Tristram, softly; I am out of breath.

T. You are not so depraved as I thought. Here's the coin I pay in. (*Kissing her.*)

Fl. I don't like you, Tristram. You take more liberties in a day than others would in a month.

T. Ah! ah! Oh wala! wala! (*Puts his finger to his head.*)

Fl. What is it? Are you giddy?

T. No, no. My constitution—my system,

Fl. What?

T. I'm going mad like the rest of them. I've caught it too.

Fl. Don't talk so; to frighten me, Tristram, like that. What do you mean?

T. Well, we shall make a better pair than two I know.

Fl. I never promised. And what would my lady say? And—oh! I forgot: she sent me to fetch you.

T. My lady?—me?

Fl. Yes, you.

T. She sent for me?

Fl. No sooner was she come in the house, than as she sat looking on the silks, one of her fits took her, and I thought she would faint: when suddenly she got up, and bade me go out and seek for you. See, here she comes.

T. What can she need with me? (*Aside.*) If she has got wind of me and Flora, it's all up.

Re-enter Diana.

D. (*to Fl.*). I see you have found him, Flora.

Fl. We were coming, my lady, as fast as we could.

D. Leave us alone. [*Exit Flora.* 481
Good Tristram; will you serve me?

T. Certainly, my lady. My lady has only to command.

D. But in a matter where your duty might seem opposed to my interest.

T. 'Tis impossible, my lady, that my duties could be opposed to my lady's.

D. I think, Tristram, that you know a secret which concerns me.

T. I assure your ladyship, upon my oath . . .

D. Stay now. Take this purse . . .

T. I thank your ladyship.

D. To convince you of my goodwill. Now I have a suspicion: and whether or no you help me to come at the truth, I shall learn it. I will not have secrets kept from me in my court.

T. Certainly not, my lady. But I pray your ladyship to speak plainly, for I am a simple man; and if I am to assist your ladyship, I must understand your ladyship. 502

D. You are a very sensible servant, Tristram. Tell me then, do you not know of some one in the court, who carries on a love-affair behind my back?

T. (*aside*). It's me.—No, my lady: I do not. It is impossible that any one should do such a thing.

D. Is not your master in love?

T. Oh! . . . my master? Certainly; not a doubt of it.

D. So I thought. Now you must tell me, good Tristram, with whom he is in love.

T. If that's the question, my lady, you may take back the purse again. Take it; I thought it was not like my luck.

D. You will not tell?

T. I cannot tell what I do not know, my lady.

D. You do not know?

T. I have not an inclination.

D. Stay yet. You shall keep the purse if you will do your best to discover who she is.

T. Your ladyship is very fair (*pocketing*), and I thank your ladyship for restoring my confidence.

D. Then tell me first. You say you know that your master is in love.

T. Certainly; as much or more than all the court.

D. All the court!

T. Except your ladyship . . . I beg your ladyship's pardon.

D. Except me?

T. And me.

D. And you?

T. And old Sir Gregory, I may say.

D. Please, Tristram, keep to the matter. By what signs know you that your master is in love?

T. First because he talks nonsense aloud to himself; then he reads and writes so many letters.

D. Letters, you say!

T. Certainly. Why, the moment that you left,
He pulled one out and read it to himself.
And now I am dead, he says, and now I live;
And all the rest of it.

D. I must know from whom
That letter came.

T. And that much I can tell.
I saw him write it to himself, last night,
And put it in his pocket. To my knowledge,
He has never sent it, and received no other,
Nor spoke to a lady since;—when, on a sudden,
He whips it out, and reads it to himself
As if 'twere newly come. Then, off he goes,
Bragging, 'tis an appointment for to-night.

D. To-night?

T. Ay, so he said. But he can't hide
The truth from me. The fact is this, my lady;
He makes believe. He sees that everybody
Is full of this same love: since 'tis the fashion
He'd be ashamed, just for the lack of a lady,
To come behind. But all the love he makes

Is to himself.

D. But if there were a lady,
Think you she would be of the court?

T. Why certainly.

D. How so?

T. Because 'tis only in the court
That such ridiculous foolery would pass.

D. Stay. If he loved a lady of the court,
I think I must have known her.

T. Very true.
Your ladyship is right. If 'twere a lady,
She could not be of the court.

D. Then we must look
To find her in the town.

T. 'Tis very plain,
That if she is not in the court, she is in the town.

D. I have set you on the track. If you will serve me,
Discover who this lady is: observe
Your master narrowly; above all to-night
Follow him where'er he goes, watch all he does;
And bring me word to-morrow. That's the service
For which, good Tristram, I will pay you well.
But can I trust you?

T. I never deceived any one, my lady: and if I can discover my master's secret, your ladyship shall know it. I hold, like your ladyship, that love is a

most contemptible disease, from which a good servant should seek to deliver his master. But I don't think we shall find any lady.

D. No lady, no pay, Tristram; remember that:
And, above all, be secret. Now, go your way,
And tell your master I wish to see him here.

T. I will, your ladyship. (*Aside.*) And as for secrets—if you knew my master's as well as I know yours, you would not need to take me into your pay. [*Exit.*

D. To-night: they meet to-night. It may be now
That I am in time: maybe they have never met,
At least not thus. It seems they have carried on
The intrigue, so far, by letter, and now by letter
They have made their assignation for to-night.
At last I have found out something . . . it shall not be . . .
Their first . . . no, no: that I can hinder . . .
I trust the clown: he could not frame a tale;
And what I gave him won him. Yet no guess
Who she should be. It tortures jealousy
To know so little: still where little is known
May little be. But Frederick doth not feign.
Nay if he feigned he would not hide it from me:
And loved he not another, he would be
More open to my meaning when I try him

With such unveilings of my inclination
As make me blush alone. O perverse love,
At once triumphant and inscrutable,
Palpable and impotent. What if he knows
I love him, and yet loves me not, but loves
Another, a rival? But if he knows not,
And if he knew, might love—while there's that hope,
They shall not meet: so much I can ensure.
I must be cruel to thee, my unknown foe:
Thou lookest to meet him, but he shall not come.
I'll make him play thee false . . . what vantage else
That he is my servant? I can send him off
Whither I will. Against this assignation
I'll make an alibi. My plan is ready:
I'll send him away from Belflor. Here he comes,
My enemy and my deity. If he quarrel
With my command he is guilty; a word will show.

Re-enter Frederick, with some papers, ink, and pen.

F. Your ladyship sent for me.
D. What have you there?
F. Some papers for your ladyship to sign.
D. Set them down on the chair.
F. I have brought besides
The settlement for Lady Laura's marriage.
D. Thank you: 'tis time I had it. I cannot now

Attend to business. I have a message, Frederick,
To send to Milan: it demands despatch,
And you must bear it to-night.
F. To-night, my lady!
D. To-night. Why not to-night?
F. No reason at all.
Except . . .
D. Except what?
F. Since your ladyship
Well knows the full devotion which I lend
To her affairs, I fear not to incur
Blame of remissness, if I beg for once
To be excused this service.
D. (*aside*). Ah, he is hit.
F. I'd travel to the corners of the globe
To serve your ladyship: and in a journey
So light as this, one that would never burden
The most unwilling servant, I can beg
Without reproach that you will find for once
Another messenger.
D. What then prevents you?
F. Good cause enough; though 'tis not of a nature
To welcome question.
D. There's no person, Frederick,
That more regards your health, nor more regrets
Your slightest ailing than I do. I fear

You have done me wrong concealing from my knowledge
The true state of your health... but if 'twas kindness
To spare me anxiety...

F. I assure, my lady...

D. I have thought you looked of late careworn and pale.

F. My health is excellent.

D. I am glad to hear it.

F. The expression of your good will reassures me
Your ladyship will humour me.

D. And I would
Most gladly, were it a matter that admitted
A bearer of less trust. But as it stands
There's nothing for it but your going to-night.
You are out of sorts, Frederick: maybe the travelling
Is just the change you need. Give me that pen,
I'll write the letter at once. (*F. gives and D. writes.*)
If you fear cold
You can close up the coach. The journey is short:
'Twill cheer you, and do you good.

F. (*aside*). Curse on my fate.
How can I escape? What devil hath now possessed her
To thwart me thus? And after all, my service
To insist; so small a matter.

D. (*giving*). Here is the letter.
Deliver it, please, with your own hand. Leave here
At six o'clock to-night. Take Tristram with you.
'Twill make me more at ease on your behalf,
In case you are ill. (*gathering up papers.*)
And whatsoe'er you do
Return by noon to-morrow: at which hour
I need the answer. You will oblige me much.
I wish you a pleasant journey. [*Exit taking the papers.*

F. Is that a blindfold player? Who is it to,
This letter? The Duke of Milan! Ha! can it be!
Is that the mischief? He is discovered, and I
Suspected of complicity, and thus
She would expose us both?

Re-enter Tristram.

We are both undone.

T. (*half aside*). Another letter! came this like the last
Borne on the winds?

F. (*aside*). She hath recognised the Duke,
No doubt. 'Twas natural. But why suspect
That I am in his secret? Till I am sure,
I must still play my part.

T. (*aside*). Secrets again:
More mysteries.

F. (*to T.*). Order me horses, Tristram,
At six o'clock.

T. What! is she off?

F. Who off?

T. The lady you should meet to-night.

F. Plague on you!
A coach at six: and be yourself prepared
To accompany me.

T. Where go we?

Re-enter Ricardo.

F. To the devil.
Order the horses.

T. Is our destination
A secret?

F. No.

T. Then who will ride postilion?

F. Go, fool, at once. [*Exit T.*
(*To R.*) Richard, you come in time:
You are recognised. See here! The Countess bids me
Deliver you this letter.

R. (*taking*). To me! Diana!
Why! 'tis addressed to Milan. 'Tis impossible.
Nay, nay; she knows not. What hath made you think it?

F. Because she bade me post this night to Milan

To give this in your hands. I pleaded sickness,
Begged she would find some other messenger:
Yet she refused. She would trust none but me.
R. And why, man, if you thought I was suspected,
Did you refuse? Another messenger
Must have betrayed me.
F. True. I was a fool
Not to have thought of that. No, now I think of it,
I knew not whither I was to be sent
When I excused myself. The fact is, Richard,
I thought I was discovered, and lost my head.
Laura and I had fixed to meet to-night.
Our only hope is flight: misleading others,
She has fallen into a trap: she is bound to marry
That fool St. Nicholas. I must persuade her
To run away. Unless we meet, the moment
Of all our life is past.
R. I see it: I see it.—
And so she hath writ to me! Why should these words,
Writ by her hand so set my heart adance?
Is it beautiful? Nay,—but 'tis my name that leads
Every direction of these little curves,
Which, by long intercourse of hand and brain,
Were specialised to typify and betray
The hiding spirit? There are such secrets here
As dazzle lovers' eyes. She will be mine.

She wrote me a letter once before in scorn,
With studied terms of coldness: yet to me
That seemed—I treasure it still—a lovers' meeting
Of our two names on the same conscious page,
A daring intimacy, her own betrothal.
Was I deceived boasting so crazed a title?
What saith she now?

F. Ha! do not break the seal.

R. Is it not mine?

F. She yet might ask it back:
And 'twould betray us if I had given it up.

R. Yes: you shall keep it till you start, and then
Give it to me. You must discover of course
That I am away from home, and leave the letter.
Will not that do?

F. This is my ruin, Richard:
It means that I must be away to-night;
And that prevents my meeting Laura; and that
Leaves the field to my rival.

Re-enter St. Nicholas.

R. Hush! see, he comes.

N. That paper you are in doubt of, gentlemen,
Is, I opine, the poem which I have lost:—
You picked it up in the garden?—a private trifle
Which I'd recover gladly.

R. I am sorry, sir,
'Tis no such lofty matter. A letter it is
Sealed and addressed, which takes our friend away.
But I can say with truth, I'd rate myself
The happiest man in the world, could I believe
That what I hold was fashioned ever so little
In your romantic vein.
N. You make me proud, sir.
Yet, you should know, I do not think my poems
As good as others think them: they are but trifles.
I wish that I could stay to explain my meaning;
But I must seek my sonnet. [*Exit.*

R. Your rival. O heavens!
F. A fool that fortune favours.
R. Not at all.
Diana hath here some purpose we have not guessed.
Come to my room: there we will read her letter;
And if it shew no sign of my discovery,
I'll write it such an answer as it asks;
Which, when you have, you may perform your service,
And see your mistress both. 'Tis but to start
At the set time, and turn about in the dark.
F. Make a pretended journey?
R. An expedition
Some ten miles out and back.

F. I'll do it, Richard.
O, you were ever excellent.
R. Arrange
Some practicable stages; and remember
To keep an eye on the time.
F. Trust me.
R. And, hark!
If some night you should make the real journey,
Would Laura fly with you?
F. Fly where?
R. I'll tell you.
I have planned the whole thing for you: I put my palace
At your command; my servants shall receive you;
The archbishop marry you, and all my friends
Attend your fête.
F. You cannot mean it, Richard!
R. By heaven, I do: but you must first persuade
Your lady to make sail.
F. That would be easy,
With such a port to run for. But how soon?
It could not be to-night.
R. I need one day
To warn my people. Come now to my room,
Where we will read this letter. Our success
Depends on secrecy.

(Re-enter St. Nicholas behind.)

'Enchained long whilom was I fain to flee;
But thou, with wildered phantom disarray,
Nightly disguised in the blue garb of day,
Besetdst the sleep-gates of my melanch'ly.'

Hem!

N. (*coming forward*). Tristram, where found you that? it was not intended for your reading.

T. So I guess, sir; but if letters be purposely thrown open on the ground, they may be read by those for whom they were not intended.

N. Give it to me. 'Tis mine.

T. I see no sign of that, sir, unless you will say that everything which the ladies let fall belongs to you.

N. No impertinence, man: give it me at once.

T. Nay; I have my duty. This belongs to my master. I shall guard it for him.

N. I tell you 'tis mine.

T. So you said of Lady Laura's glove.

N. That has nothing to do with it. Give me the paper.

T. Not till 'tis proved to be yours, sir: which can never be.

N. I tell you, Tristram, that I wrote it myself.

T. We shall soon see that, sir. This is writ by a

lady; who is prisoned or chained somewhere in the court. And she says;—well, what she says I cannot tell; but my master thinks she has run away, and has bade me order the horses to be after her.

N. What ridiculous stuff you make of it, Tristram. 'Tis addressed to Love: you do not understand.

T. Yes: it is love, and court love too: I understand that well enough, and I understand that 'tis writ to a man; therefore 'tis pikestaff-plain that 'tis writ by a woman: therefore it half follows that you did not write it: and therefore it belongs to my master.

N. How therefore belongs it to your master?

T. Why, whose else should it be? His letters come from the four quarters, no one knows whither; just where this came from.

N. Nonsense, Tristram: I assure you 'tis mine.

T. Think not to owl me thus.

N. Man! I swear that I composed that poem myself. Had you any culture you would distinguish it from the poor style of a woman. It has fallen from my pocket by accident: and if you will not give it me, I must take it from you.

T. Hands off, sir, now. I can't think why you should try to get what belongs to another. You are mistaken. 'Master of mine' it says—and would a man write thus? (*begins to read*).

N. Death! stop mine ears! That I should hear my verse
Again profaned by thee, thou baseborn clown.

T. I read correctly, sir. If you find fault with my reading, 'tis the strangeness of the matter. I have good reasons for not parting with this; and I am not a baseborn clown.

N. Worse; thou art a thief.

T. Thief call you me? Now were the verses ten thousand times yours, sir, I'd never give 'em you. I defy you!

N. Thou to defy me, slave; paid by the month
To render menial offices to one
Himself the annual hireling of the lady
Whom I shall call my sister! O thou fool,
If reason cannot work into thy skull
'Cause of its wooden thickness, I'll find means
To punish thee.

T. Good day, sir. Stand you here and rail. I must be off with my master after this lady. But I shall not forget your language to me, sir: be this paper what it will. [*Exit.*

N. Tristram, Tristram, I beg of you! my sonnet! my sonnet!

ACT · II

SCENE · I

Night. The garden, at Laura's windows, which are nearly to the ground. L. a wall with door in it leading from the park without. Enter by door in travelling costume FREDERICK *and* TRISTRAM *carrying a small portmantle. F. stays behind to lock the door.*

TRISTRAM (*coming to front*).

HERE'S a journey: twenty miles about and home again: and no lady. Were it not for the letter I found on the path, I should hold to my opinion that it is all a make-believe, and that there is no lady at all: and that my master wrote that first letter to himself, making the appointment to meet himself, . . he returns so pleased, with his head in the air, like the best satisfied lover. I have a fool for my master. He is but a fool, tho' he needs no humouring. (*To F. who approaches.*) Well, now we are at home again, sir; and as it were partly returned to our senses . . . .

FREDERICK.

Silence, Tristram. Take off your boots.

T. Pray, sir . . .

F. Not a word. Obey me.

T. Heaven help us! what is this for?

F. Silence. Are they off?

T. They are coming.

F. Hark now what you have to do. Cross the grass silently, unlock my door, creep upstairs like a thief, and sit in my chamber without a movement till I come.

T. The grass is like a sponge. I have begun to catch cold already: I am just going to sneeze.

F. Sneeze, and I'll strangle you.

T. Is this your treatment for all my services?

F. Your service is your duty to obey:
And once you served me well: of late you are grown
Questionous and prying; which I have so far borne,
Because I have been in doubt whether it were best
To thrash you or discharge you.

T. And no wonder neither. Thus the world will repay devotion. Can I see you so blind to your good fortune, and when heaven's door stands open . . .

F. Heaven's door! what is this?

T. You do not know.

F. Say what you mean.

T. This court, wherein you serve and get no thanks,
You might rule and be thanked.
F. Just as I thought;
Ere I dismiss you I shall tell the Countess
Your insolence. The whipping you will get
Will save me trouble.
T. I pray you on my knees.
F. Get up, fool, lest you sneeze. And would you escape
Your rich deservings, be off.
T. Betray me not, sir: I will obey you better.
F. Silence: go do as I bid you. Begone, and take your boots. [*Exit T.*
So my man knows her secret. 'Tis high time
That Laura and I were off. This salves my conscience
From any scruple. 'Tis a rule of art
To make obstructions serve: and my chief hindrance,
Diana's passion, can but urge me on.
So the mischance, which drew me hence to-night,
Hath brought me hither a more secret way.
The night is still. I would there were a wind.
And there's the clock. (*Clock strikes.*) I'll wait
Till it hath sounded . . No light . . I'll tap.
(*Goes to window and taps. Laura comes to window and opens.*)
F. All's well. 'Tis I.

LAURA.

Frederick, not gone to Milan?

F. I escaped but with a thousand torments—
May I come in?

L. We can talk here.

F. The night
Is very still, our voices will be heard:
They run along the wall.

L. Then I'll come out.

F. We shall be seen.

L. The maids are all abed.
There's none to see us; and the moon is clouded.
We'll walk by the yew hedge. Give me your hand.

F. 'Tis but one step.

L. I know. (*Comes down.*)

F. My kiss. (*Kisses her.*).

L. O Frederick,
You have broken your own rule, and kissed me thrice.

F. One kiss a day, with two days in arrear,
Makes three.

L. Alas! I thought 'twas love's excess,
And still I am kissed by rule.

F. And be content, love,
To keep the little rules we make ourselves,
Since thou must break such great ones; and canst dare

Deceive the Countess, disobey thy father,
And brave the world's opinion: all which sins
I come to stablish in thee. There's now no choice
But fly with me or take St. Nicholas.
L. That name is desperation. Have you no plan
To save me?
F. If you dare fly with me to Milan.
L. To-night?
F. Would 'twere to-night.
L. But when, love, when?
F. Trust me to find the time.
L. And why to Milan?
F. My friend the Duke, being now away from home,
Lends me his palace. All we else should lack,
Appointment and conveyance, he supplies.
We have his countenance now, his influence after,
To appease your father and sister.
L. Are you such friends?
F. There cannot be two hearts in all the world
Nearer-familiar than are his and mine.
L. You never told me.
F. I had not heard from him
Now for three years.
L. 'Tis strange.
F. Nay, 'tis not strange.
Ours was a boyhood friendship; such affection

Born in life's spring is perfect with the flower.
The memory is a binding intimacy,
Which grows as we grow from it: in its strength
Is our lost tenderness; its truth is proved
By every lie the world has given our hopes:
Absence and age best feed it. We remember
First ecstasies, and the unreserved embrace
Of mutual spirits, and worship the remembrance.
The Duke and I are strangers in the world,
Courteous acquaintance in society,
But to ourselves, twin individual gods.

L. Alas, poor me!

F. Can it displease you, love,
I have such a friend?

L. Ere it is too late, Frederick,
Think if you love me enough.

F. Why, 'tis a question
To make me think you think I think I do not.

L. Indeed, ere I consent to be your wife . . .

F. You have consented, Laura.

L. Nay, but hear me.
Before we marry, you must know a thing,
Which, since it might lessen your love for me,
Shall not be kept till after.

F. Then tell it quickly.

L. What you have said, and what I have to tell,

So dwarfs my little humble plant of love.

F. Tell it.

L. Diana loves you.

F. You know it too!

L. You know it!

F. I!—Why, Laura, is this your secret?

L. I see you have guessed it; yet, perhaps, for thinking
Thou shouldst be loyal where thy faith is cherished,
Thou hast never weighed her claim with mine; and that
I'd have thee do. Look to thine interest:
For loving women differ not so much
But all may make good wives; and whatsoe'er
Thou thinkest to see in me, Frederick, I am sure
I lack all excellence. There's nothing in me
Why I should have preferment o'er another,
And least of all of her who can boast loveliness
To match her love; and add those other gifts,
Which are necessities to one like thee.
Thou, with high friendships shouldst have power and station,
And fitted for the fairest use of wealth,
Thou art wronged in the want of it: and, Love, I love thee
So better than myself, that I would see thee

Happily another's rather than my own
With the reproach of selfishness, the knowledge
That thou wert sacrificed for my poor love.
F. If women differ little, what of men?
St. Nicholas loves you, and would give you rank.
L. Thou knowst thou wrongst me, Frederick, turning thus
My love of thee to banter of my love.
F. I only banter where you dare be grave.
L. Because thou knowest, Love, I desire not wealth.
My happiness would be to live with thee
And for thee: but to thee what can I bring?
Think not because I wish thee fortunate,
That I forget my hope, or slight the treasure
So much desirèd of my loving soul.
F. And for that loving soul you bid me take
Some fifty thousand ducats by the year,
A major-domo, and a heap of things
That are a proverb for their emptiness!
L. Diana's love, I said; that with the ducats.
F. Well, what doth all this come to when 'tis told?
First is Diana's love. Diana's love
Is nothing, for I do not love Diana.
Next are the ducats: fifty thousand ducats.
They are nothing either—by the year! Why, Laura,
Were 't fifty thousand ducats by the day

.'Twere nothing to me. You can little guess
My prodigal soul. I should expend it all
And sit at home and be as poor as ever.
L. How could you spend so much?
F. Nothing is much.
Man's capabilities being infinite
And his state pitiful, the simplest scheme
For bettering any faculty he hath,
Would eat up all the money in the world.
L. But to use riches rightly—
F. I have no desire
That earth can satisfy, but one; and that
Shall I play false to?
L. Nay; I trust you well.
F. Then waste no more the precious moments, Laura,
To question the great blessing we enjoy.
Our hours will all be as this hour to-night;
Either to step with in eternity
Towards our perfection with unwavering will,
Or with a questioning purpose let it slide,
And leave us far behind. A man's desires
Are his companions and by them he is known;
But he himself is what he grows to be
Using his time.
L. How best to use it now?

F. First to assure thee, dearest, that all the joys
I have had or hoped are nothing to thy love.
And next, that we may make it sure, I ask thee
To say thou'lt fly with me.

L. When, Frederick, when?
I fear 'twill never be; we have but two days.

F. Therefore be ready at any moment, Laura.
All's fixed except the time: that must depend
Upon occasion. If I cannot see thee,
Ricardo, whom I have made my confidant,
Will bring thee word. He cannot be suspected,
And thou mayst trust him.

L. Dare I tell my father?

F. That's my chief scruple; and yet we dare not tell him.
If only Providence would give him back
His hearing for one day! After one day
Spent with St. Nicholas, I should not fear
To broach our matter.

L. He has the marriage contract
Ready to sign.

F. Not as he thinks. By luck
They entrusted it to me; and as I have drawn it
He cannot sign it. He must give it me back,
And that will make delay.

L. Of all these chances,

If any one go wrong . . .

F. All will go well.

See, here's my portrait, Laura, which I promised:
'Tis framed like yours; that is its only merit.

L. O, let me have it.

F. Take it. That you should care
To look upon it, makes me ashamed.

L. O, Frederick!
If you knew all my foolishness, I think
You would despise me. By this little light
I can see nothing. Is't well done?

F. So, so.
It flatters me: but that's the artist's trick.

L. Flatters you! 1090

F. Well, it taints me with the fashion,
Which is the vulgar dress of imitations,
And a less blunder than mere naked skill.
The individual ideals are given
To genius only.

L. I would have had you painted
Just as you are.

F. Nay.—Hark! I hear a step . . .

L. What can we do?

F. Some one is coming hither.

L. Where can we hide?

F. I cannot think; unless

You creep along the hedge. I'll wait and see
Who 'tis. I think it must be Tristram. [*Exit Laura.*

Enter Ricardo.

RICARDO.

Frederick!

F. Richard! what is the matter?

R. Forgive my coming:
But if you wish it thought that you are at Milan,
Your room should not be lighted, and your servant
Should not be singing.

F. Singing!—is Tristram singing?

R. Hark! You may hear. [*T.'s lute heard faintly.*

F. By heaven!—the wretch! Tell Laura
Why I am gone. All will be lost. [*Exit.*

R. Indeed,
Unless Diana is sleeping very soundly,
The escapade's betrayed.

Re-enter Laura.

My service, lady.

L. I heard you speak with Frederick, sir, and thank you
For your kind offices.

R. I need no thanks.

I have a deeper interest in your welfare
Than you can guess. I fear that fellow Tristram
May ruin us all.

L. Frederick hath told me, sir,
You know our secret, and will act between us;
For which I thank you. I bid you now good-night:
I should go in.

R. As soon as possible.
Pray you be not observed. But first I beg you
Thank me for Frederick's visit.

L. You, sir! why?

R. Why, but for me he had been at Milan.

L. Ah!
I thank you very much.

R. He doth not scheme
Well for himself. He needs a wife.

L. Indeed
I cannot scheme.

R. And 'tis the fairer wish
You neither may have ever need. Good-night.

L. Good-night, sir. [*Exit in at window.*

R. She's a good creature, quick and sensible;
She'll fly with Frederick. It provokes my soul
That that conceited inconsiderate loon
Should put us all in peril. I have half a mind
To take him in my pay.

Re-enter Frederick with a lute.

F. Is Laura gone?

R. And not too soon. If your fine musical man
Have waked the Countess she may have heard you too.
He is silenced now, I hope.

F. Here's his curst lute:
I took it from him.

R. Ha! then give it to me.
The very thing. I'll step into the gap,
And take the blame of this untimely singing
Upon myself. Go in and leave me here:
And if to-morrow any ask who 'twas
That played and sang at midnight—why 'twas I.
Go in.

F. Well, bravo, Richard: you're a genius.

R. Leave me.

F. I go. Good-night. [*Exit.*

R. Now must I sing.
And when there's none to hear I am sometimes able
To please myself: else I must ask indulgence.

Sings.

My eyes for beauty pine,
My soul for Goddes grace:
No other hope nor care is mine;
To heaven I turn my face.

One splendour thence is shed
From all the stars above:
'Tis namèd when God's name is said,
'Tis love, 'tis heavenly love.

And every gentle heart,
That burns with true desire,
Is lit from eyes that mirror part
Of that celestial fire.

NICHOLAS (*heard entering unseen*).

Very sweet!

R. (*aside*). Ha! have I an audience after all?

N. Ricardo, I believe.

R. St. Nicholas, is't not?

N. Your lute, sir, as Amphion drew the trees
Up by the roots, hath drawn me from my bed.

R. Would I could make the lyrical apology
With which, I doubt not, he replanted them.

N. Nay, no apology. And, to say truth,
'Twas not so much your music as my wish
To catch the singer brought me out. I thought
'Twas Frederick's servant. He should not forget it
If I should catch him breaking rules.

R. I hope
I break no rules.

N. You see you are very near

The ladies' windows.

R. True: of course I must be.

N. And serenading is among the offences
Punished with diet.

R. Being a stranger, sir,
I cannot be suspected of the knowledge
That might incriminate me. You, no doubt,
Are more familiar.

N. Yes, there is one window
Which I should know: and as you chance to stand
Just underneath it, I will not dissemble
That when I saw you first I felt the pangs
Of maddening jealousy. To find 'twas you
Relieved me entirely.

R. Nay then, truly, sir,
I owe you apology: for if your mistress
Should have mistook my falala for yours,
The poor performance may have hurt your credit.

N. Nay, sir, I sing so seldom, I only fear
I cannot be suspected. If I might
I'd ask you sing again. There's nought affects me
Like music in the moonlight.

R. I would oblige you
But for the rules you speak of. Were't not better
We should go in? 'tis midnight.

N. Oh, I could sit

And sigh beneath that window all the night.
Is there not wondrous softness in the thought,
That she one loves is sleeping?
R. I will leave you
To your love thoughts.
N. Nay, nay, no reason, sir.
I have full leisure for sweet meditation.
I will go in with you. 'Tis a rich comfort
To dream of the belovèd. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE · 2

On the terrace, in front of the house. Enter DIANA and RICARDO. FLORA attending Diana.

DIANA.

What time is't, sir?

RICARDO.

I heard the bells of the town
Strike ten but now.
D. Ah! you can hear the bells,
Because they are strange to you. I note them most
The days they miss . . . And so 'tis only ten . . .
I hope you are comfortable here, Ricardo:
Gregory took care of you? The clocks for example

Did not disturb your rest?

R. Your ladyship
Means to reproach me with late hours: but if
I had thought my singing could be heard . . .

D. Your singing?
How musical the world is now-a-days—
Yet I heard not your singing.

R. I am very glad:
I feared I had offended. For myself
I can assure you that though some things here
Remind me of Milan, where the Duke . . .

D. Remember,
Speak not to me of Milan.

R. A thousand pardons,
I am schooled to hide my thoughts, and shall obey:
Tho' in your sight they wander to the duke,
Who for that grace in such sad sickness pines.
A lord so loving, and so fair a lady,
Would she be also kind,—would make their courtiers
As envied as themselves.

D. Enough, forget him.
But say you that he is really sick, Ricardo?

R. Hopelessly he languishes. I do not think
He is long for this world.

D. So consumed with folly!

R. I too thought that his love was folly, lady,

Till I came here: but now I know he is wise.

D. I half suspect he sent you here to try me,
With soft insinuations.

R. 'Twere his wish
I do not doubt: although he spake no word
That I could wrest to such instruction, madam.

D. You serve him well.

R. May all your servants ever
Love you as I do him. Yet that's too much.

D. 'Tis all too much. But I can truly boast
I have very faithful servants. There's Sir Gregory:
I think you could not better him at Milan.
What say you?

R. Sir Gregory is the very mirror
Of knightly reverence.

D. He is sadly deaf.
Then there's my secretary.

R. Your secretary?

D. Frederick.

R. Ah, Frederick: on so short acquaintance
How can I judge?

D. You have a faculty
Of observation, which I am pleased to prove:
Besides, since you are a stranger,—as you note
Our clocks,—your eyes, no doubt, while yet they are fresh,

Will pounce upon a thousand little things,
Which we are blind to, seeing every day.
Tell me your first impression.
R. Your ladyship
Would never task me thus, but in security
Of finding perfect praise. I'll rather think
You ask me my opinion, as do poets,
To judge of my capacity.
D. Nay, nay.
Nor will I force your flattery. Speak your mind.
I hold him not in wondrous estimation.
What of his person?
R. He has a good deportment,
Yet stoops a little.
D. You have a soldier's eye.
He is tall, and hath the scholar's negligence.
A martial stiffness were much out of place.
R. True: and his open grace seems less a manner
Than very nature; being itself unlinked
With any distant bearing.
D. Now you teach me.
You might have known him long to hit him so.
Have you talked with him much?
R. Enough to prove him
A most ingenious gentleman.
D. Ah!—ingenious!

Ingenious;—that is a doubtful word.
You do not mean contriving?

Enter F. and T. in their travelling costume as before.

R. See, madam: 'tis he that comes.
(*Aside.*) Her love is but a fancy; else would she never
Provoke discussion on him, and seek to praise him.—

D. Frederick: returned so soon!—miraculous.
Such expedition. Thou canst scarce have rested.
'Tis two hours ere thy time.

FREDERICK.

'Twas my good fortune
To meet no hindrance.

D. But thy health, good servant;
Thy sickness?

F. Madam, let my quick despatch
Bury my late reluctance. I confess
I was unreasonable. Indeed, the journey
Hath quite restored my spirits.

D. Yes, so it seems.
I hoped that it might be so. Hast thou my answer?

F. 'Tis here. (*Handing letter.*)

D. Thou must have roused the Duke from sleep.

F. 'Twas such an hour as one might look to find
A duke a-bed.

D. And he was not? Pray, tell us

Exactly how he was employed.

F. I chanced

To find him banqueting in merry company;
Such as make war on night, and march their force
Across the frontier, for a long campaign
In the enemy's country.

D. (*to R.*). Banqueting, you hear.
And at that hour.

F. All night they kept it up.

D. (*to R.*). Hark you.

R. I hear and wonder. (*To F.*) Say you, sir,
The Duke was merry, that he held a feast
Within the palace?

F. (*aside*). Heavens!—how I have blundered!
Nay, sir, I said not so: I said expressly,
Or should have said, he was another's guest.

R. And yet I have never known him . . .

F. Indeed 'tis true:
He said to me himself those very words.
I have never known myself do this, he said.

TRISTRAM (*aside*).

Now, they are at their fooling again, and not a single word of any sense. 'Tis enough to drive a man mad with bewilderment.

R. (*to D.*). To plunge into distraction so unwonted

Argues despair. Grave men use dissipation
To drown their misery.
D. No doubt: and yet
Answer not for him.
F. True it is, my lady,
He did confess as much to me a stranger.
Despair;—that was his word. He seemed, withal,
Wondrously put out at all I chanced to say:
And very sick he looked.
T. (*aside*). Madness and lies! I'll hear no more of this. (*Goes aside to Flora.*)
D. It seems that dissipation
Agrees not with grave men.
R. Heaven smite me dead
If I protest not 'gainst the wrong you do him.
D. So hot!—Well, thrash this out between yourselves:
'Tis nought to me. And, Frederick, when you have dressed,
Rested, and breakfasted, attend me here.
I thank you for your service.
F. You are welcome, madam,
To all such offices. (*Going.*)
D. Please leave your servant.
I have some papers ready indoors to send you.
F. I thank you. [*Exit.*

R. I crave permission: I would follow
To ask of my particular affairs;
How they are spoke of whence he comes.

D. (*bowing permission*). I hope
You will hear good.

R. (*aside, going*). My Frederick needs fresh prompting.
He is so preoccupied in his own love,
That I am forgotten. [*Exit.*

Diana opens the letter.

T. (*to Fl., shewing and shaking purse*). Look here! Listen here!

FLORA.

What have you there?

T. Money,—ducats: all ducats.

D. (*reading aloud*). *I could not have chosen, among all my friends, one more discreet and serviceable than is Ricardo. There is nothing so difficult that he has not experience for it . . . nothing so private but that he may not well be trusted with it . . . He has been accustomed to manage all my affairs . . .*

Fl. (*to T.*). But where did you get them, Tristram?

T. Ah! She gave them me.

Fl. The Countess! What for?

T. Secrets? and there's more where they came from.

Fl. More secrets, or more ducats?

T. Both,—plenty of both.

Fl. How nice for us.

T. Us! Who d'you mean by us?

Fl. I mean when we are married, Tristram.

T. Married, say you, now? I thought you had not promised. When I had no money you hung off. Now you see me as rich as Plutarch, you're quick enough. But it's a hoax. I filled this bag with curtain-rings to deceive you: and where are you now?

Fl. O, Tristram, let me see.

D. Tristram!

T. Your ladyship!

D. I'll speak with you.
Flora, depart. [*Exit Flora.*

Now, Tristram, tell me shortly,
What you have learned.

T. I have found a letter, madam,
Writ by the lady. (*fumbles for it.*)

D. Indeed!—that is good news. 1341
Nothing could please me better. In so short time
This is done excellently. Who is she, Tristram?

T. I think she is chained up somewhere in the court.

D. Chained in the court! What mean you?

T. Here 'tis, my lady:
Read for yourself. (*giving.*)

D. Why this is poetry;

And in St. Nicholas' hand.

T. I hope and trust
Your ladyship will not take his part.

D. His part!
What does this mean?

T. I picked that up in the garden:
St. Nicholas found me with it, and said 'twas his.
I stood by it firmly 'twas the lady's piece,
And written to my master. He called me a thief;
And if your ladyship . . .

D. Stay, Tristram, stay.
This paper is nothing: take it, and right yourself,
As best you are able, with St. Nicholas . . .
Tell me now all that happened on the journey
I sent you last night with your master.

T. Your ladyship
Sent him?

D. Of course. I sent you both to Milan.
When did you arrive there?

T. At Milan! Is't possible
Your ladyship should think I have been to Milan?

D. Not been to Milan?

T. Me!

D. You accompanied
Your master?

T. I did.

D. (*holding R.'s letter*). And he has been to Milan.

T. It's true, your ladyship, I understand
Nothing my master says, and very little
Of what you say to him: and if you say
He 'as been to Milan, I'll not meddle with it.
But if you say that I have been to Milan,
I am very much deceived. I do not like
That any man should think such things of me;
That I can go and not go, and be here
And there at once.

D. Stay, Tristram; tell me plainly
All that your master has done since yesterday.

T. Well, first I found him with another letter,
All sighs and groans: then suddenly he bade me
Order the horses, and prepare myself
To drive with him to the devil at six o'clock.
At six we started on the Milan road
And came by dark to Asti; there we changed
Both horses and postilions and drove on:
And after three hours' jolting, when I guessed
We should be nearing Milan, the coach stopped
In a ferny glade, and we got out; and then
I saw we were at Belflor, and the trees
Were in your ladyship's park.

D. Ah! Then what did he?

T. Came in and locked the gate of the park behind us,

And sent me on to his room, and bade me wait
Till he should come.

D. What hour was that?

T. Eleven.

D. (*aside*). The hour, no doubt, when he should meet his mistress—

When came he in?

T. By midnight.

D. He locked the gate . . .

The lady is in the palace.

T. So he pretends.

D. He let slip nothing on the journey?

T. He lit

A pocket-lamp, and sat, mute as a fish,
Counting the minutes on his watch; and then,
As if it served as well to tell the time,
He fetched the jewelled portrait from his breast,
And gazed on that.

D. A portrait?

T. Certainly.

D. Carries he a portrait, say you?

T. Certainly.

D. You know not who 'tis of?

T. Not I, my lady.

D. Could you get sight of it?

T. Impossible.

'At night 'tis neath his pillow, and all the day
He keeps it in a little special pocket
In his doublet here, just under his heart; or if
He pulls it out, he holds it by his chin
Where none may see.

D. You should have told me of this,
This portrait: have you no guess who 'tis of?

T. I guess 'tis part of the pretence, my lady;
For when the fit is on he'll talk to it:
And once I saw him kiss it.

D. Thank you, Tristram.
Take now these papers to your master at once
And tell him . . .

T. (*going*). I will, your ladyship.

D. Stay yet . . .
This letter which he brought me, did you see
Whence he procured it?

T. I suppose, my lady,
He wrote it himself, no doubt of it. Where else
Should he have got it?

D. Tell Ricardo, Tristram,
I wish to see him here, at once. Your master
May wait on me at noon.

T. About that gentleman . . .

D. Begone, and do my bidding. [*Exit T.*
They have met in spite of me—they have met: and he

Hath dared to disobey me and lie to my face.
Who can it be? who is she? she is in my house. . .
Ah! what a prey I have netted! One of my maids. . .
One of my maids, it must be . . O detestation!
And he hath her portrait. Ah, he loves, he loves.
The love that taught me to dissemble and scheme,
Hath taught him to meet plot with counterplot.—
Frederick, dear Frederick! 'tis unworthy of you:
This is too hard upon me . . I loved you well.
Shame, shame, shame, shame! Indeed he cannot know
How much I love him . . he cannot. Am I too old
At twenty-seven? out-matched! I had taken too
This letter for the Duke's. Ho! the insolence
To assume his fulsomeness! to forge in terms
Of a humble obedient lover, so he might
Keep tryst with . . O shame, shame! and then to write it
He must have broke my seal, and read my letter—
He has gone too far: here is a slip in honour
Which I may work on. I'll not give him up,
Not yet. He can be shamed: and first I'll prove
The forgery, and then wring confession from him.
'Tis well I have at hand so trusty a witness.

Re-enter Ricardo.

R. Your ladyship sent for me.

D. I did, Ricardo.
In answer to the favour, which most gladly
I do you at the Duke's request, I beg
A service for myself.
R. My honoured master
Commands me, lady; and you command my master.
I am twice yours.
D. Again! well—Look at this!
Is this your famous master's writing? Look.
You know it? (*giving letter.*)
R. As my own.
D. Is that then his?
R. It is,
And writ his best.
D. Why, 'tis a forgery,
And you are deceived.
R. Nay, 'tis no forgery.
D. You are certain?
R. Certain.
D. You may read it through,
Though 'tis about yourself. Examine it well,
If 'tis authentic. You will only find
Prodigal praise to make you blush.
R. (*aside*). No wonder
If I do blush, faced with my own device.
(*aloud, giving back.*) I'll strive to make this good.

D. And 'tis his hand?

R. It is.

D. I am glad, because it came as answer
To a letter I wrote but yesterday, and gave
To Frederick, ordering him to ride to Milan
And give it the Duke. This morning, as you saw,
He hands me this. His servant who was with him
Tells me that he has not been to Milan at all,
But slept in the court.

R. (*aside*). Pest on that sneaking dolt!

D. What say you now?

R. May he not have used some other messenger?
I had my doubts when he brought in his tale,
That history of the banquet.—Did I not say
The Duke was wronged?

D. True, true; and tho' I am glad
He is quit of forgery, he is not of lying.
What can I think?

R. I thought your ladyship
Trusted in Frederick wholly. When this morning
You praised him to me . . .

D. Praised him! stay, I beg;
I praised him not, save to draw words from you.
And you described him well; did not you say
He was contriving?

R. Then you trust him not?

D. See how he acts. Ah, if I told you all!
And yet to tell argues much confidence. . . .
(*Ricardo is silent and Diana continues.*)
I have strange sympathies, affinities,
Magnetic or electric it may be,
Which rule my trust and liking: if all feel them
I cannot say: in me they are intimations
Of supernatural efficacy: I find
My first impressions never prompt me wrong.
Some men I see only to avoid,—You know
A strong example of that;—on the other hand
There are some faces,—eyes, I think,—that draw me
At first encounter; so that I often fancy
There must be a subtle emanation thrown
By the spirit, as light from fire. Now yesterday
When I saw you, I felt the secret shock
Which told me I was in presence of a soul
In harmony with mine, one I could trust,
If I should need a friend: and when I wrote
To the Duke, it was not that my judgment wanted
The assurance which his letter gives. I knew
How it would be.—I hardly think, Ricardo,
That, had I asked for his own character,
Your master could have writ more praise.
R. I wish
To please my lady, as I have pleased the Duke.

I have kept his secrets.

D. I shall tell you mine.

Frederick hath had for some time an intrigue
With a lady—you understand,—a liberty
I never have allowed, nor will: besides
In him 'tis most intolerable . . .
Now yesterday it chanced I came to learn
He had made appointment with this certain person
To meet by night: I know not who she is;
But, wishing to prevent it, I contrived
To send him on my message to the Duke;
With what result you have heard.

R. The Duke, my lady,
Is the only gainer here.

D. And are not you?

R. Yes, I too, if I am raised in your esteem.

D. Then you must help me.

R. I can truly vouch
Your ladyship has read my heart and soul.
I feel heaven-drawn to serve you to the death.
What is't to do?

D. Only seek out this matter
For me; discover who this lady is.
For private reasons I feel justified
In using any means to learn the truth
Dishonestly held from me by my servant:

And so I have questioned Tristram. He assures me
They met last night: but he is profoundly dull,
And not in Frederick's confidence.

R. Has he no notion
How Frederick got this letter?

D. No.

R. Nor a hint
Of this mysterious lady?

D. He cannot help you.

R. Your ladyship must have a near suspicion.

D. Only a suspicion that's unfit to tell.

Enter Laura.

Here is my sister, whom I wish to question.
Come to me soon again; I have meanwhile
Myself a stroke to play. When we next meet
I may know more.

R. Your most devoted servant. [*Exit.*

D. Good morning, dearest Laura.

LAURA.

Good morning, sister.

D. Did you sleep well last night?

L. I slept till nine.

D. What hour went you to bed?

L. Not very late . . .

D. Nay: but what hour?—before eleven?

L. (*aside*). What's this?
Are we discovered?
D. Was it before eleven?
L. I cannot tell. Why do you ask, Diana?
What is it has happened?
D. Answer me, I beg,
And you shall know. About that hour of the night
Did you hear any noise?
L. (*aside*). Ricardo's singing.—
What kind of noise?
D. Why, any noise, between
Eleven and midnight.
L. Did you hear a noise?
D. No: but did you?
L. O no: I heard no noise.
What made you think there was a noise?
D. I have reason.
L. Was there a robbery?
D. Nay: no robbery.
And yet there was, Laura, a robbery:
Of honour,—our honour,—of woman's honour.
Laura, thou knowest the sacredness of love:
Love is the one thing in the world which women
Must guard from profanation; for by love
They rule; and if they trifle with their power,
They come to be men's chattels, not their queens.

Thou'lt soon be married, Laura, and I can talk
Freely of these things: I have taught thee the religious
And philosophic doctrines; but to-day
We deal with facts. And first, then, I rejoice
Thy husband will be a man whom thou wilt rule,
One who adores thee reverently, who holds
Of love, as I, and with some special fancy:—
He is quite a poet.—Why, now, shouldst thou smile?
Thou hast no taste in poetry, but suppose
St. Nicholas had lacked that inner sight,
Had fancied thee merely because he thought thee
A fine girl, and had used the common tricks
Of odious trifling, till he dared to kiss thee,
And meet thee alone, and put his arm about thee . . .

L. Good heavens, Diana! I hope you do not think
He has ever done so.

D. No: of course he wouldn't.
But 'tis a fact men do such things; and that
Not with one woman only. And 'tis true
That there are ladies who admit the addresses
Of more than one man.

L. O Diana!

D. Indeed,
'Tis true: and women are to blame if men
Make them their sport. Thou'rt shocked: but 'tis a fact
That this detested pestilence invades

Earth's every nook: my palace doors and bolts,
My strong precautions, my well-known regard
For strictness, my injunctions, my example,
Cannot expel it.

L. Pray, Diana, tell me
What it is: you frighten me. Was any caught
Breaking the rules, or is it but suspicion?

D. Of the two criminals, the man I know,
The woman I know not; but if I knew her,
I am in the mood to kill her.

L. (*aside*). Thank heaven, she does not guess me—
Who is the man?

D. Better not ask; it matters not to thee:
But thou canst help me find this erring Eve.
If thou'st observed in any of the maids
Conscious behaviour, scrupulous regard
To petty adornment, or, what most betrays,
An inconsiderate blushing . . .

L. (*aside*). The maids, she says!
One of the maids! Good heavens!—

D. Marcela:
Could it be she? She is handsome.

L. 'Tis not she:
She tells me all her secrets.

D. Dorothy?

L. I do not think it.

D. Katharine?
L. No, not Kate.
D. I'll find the traitress out.
L. (*aside*). To save myself
I had best fall in with this.
D. What do you say?
L. I have not a suspicion,—but . . .
D. But what?
What?
L. If there's any one who might be charged
With levity . . .
D. Who is it?
L. You'll not be angry,
Diana?
D. Nay: but tell me.
L. I should say,
If there's one frivolous, and more than others
Unapt to profit by the rules . . .
D. 'Tis who?
L. I think 'tis your own maid.
D. Flora?—pooh! pooh!
Flora's almost a hoyden.
L. (*aside*). How stupid of me!
D. They meet at night, Laura: unless he dares
To pass my chamber-door, 'tis in the garden.
Your window looks that way. I thought last night

You might have heard them.

L. Why, it's very unlikely
I should hear through the window.

D. Still, your window
Gives you an opportunity to watch.
You could step out and hide in the garden.

L. Alone?

D. I would not ask my sister to play spy,
If it were possible that any scandal
Dared with its spotted finger point at her.

L. But who is the man, Diana?

D. If I tell,—
And you must know,—promise you will not breathe it.

L. You need not ask.

D. 'Tis Frederick.

L. Frederick!
Incredible!

D. No, 'tis not incredible.
Nothing is incredible of any man.
And, Laura, I know that he is in love. He carries
A portrait of his lady in his pocket.

L. (*aside*). Ah!

D. I'll make an effort first to get at that.
But if I fail, I must ask you to watch
To-night, just for one night, only one hour.
You are trembling, Laura.

L. So are you, Diana.
D. I am angry.
L. So am I.
D. No: you are frightened.
Dare you not watch the garden?
L. O yes: I promise
I'll watch the garden well to-night, Diana.
If he should venture again, I'll see him. I think
I could wait longer than one hour.
D. Do so:
I shall set guard within. Eleven's the time.
L. (*aside*). Could kindest ingenuity contrive
Better than this? But how shall I warn Frederick
About the picture?—

Enter Sir Gregory and St. Nicholas.

D. Good-morning, gentlemen. I need not ask
The reason why you visit me thus early.

NICHOLAS.

Early is late to them that find their sunrise
In seeing thee, my lady.
D. Better speak, sir,
Your poetry to Laura.
N. She is my rose,
The rose of my sun's garden-ground, and I
The nightingale forlorn that steal to woo her.

D. That's very well. But I now, by my name,
Should be your moon.

N. I have a verse to fit. [*Reciting.*
The flowers of dawn are uplifted to hear
The birds' enamoured tune,
Which tell their love in the pale ear
Of the far-flying moon.

D. That's very beautiful. Now, tell your love:
I fly. [*Goes to Sir Gregory.*
Sir Gregory, sit you to the table:
These are the articles. [*They sit, D. shews papers.*

GREGORY.

I much regret
The small provision that I make for Laura.
But if St. Nicholas doth as he has promised,
That will suffice. I see the treaty lacks
Nought but the seals.

D. He will make Laura rich.

G. My elder brother, as your ladyship knows,
Is childless, and next heir to such estates,
As fairly promise Laura twenty times
As much as what St. Nicholas gives her now.
Meanwhile we must not reckon on this chance.

D. Read it, Sir Gregory.

L. (*to N.*). The day is fixed, and there my father sits
Reading the settlement: what would you more?

N. O Laura,
More gracious words. Who that now heard us talk
Would guess we were to marry in two days?
L. Maybe we are not.
N. Nay, dear one, do not doubt me:
Have I not sworn my faith a thousand times?
And were I an emperor . . .
L. Who wants emperors?
N. Or even a prince.
L. I do not care for princes.
G. (*aloud*). Heigh! heigh! Why this will never do.
What's this?
N. But what can now prevent our marriage, Laura?
L. Human affairs are ever so uncertain,— 1671
And one of us might die,—and if 'twas you,
Think how much needless sorrow I then should suffer
For having loved you now. And, seeing the risk,
'Twere scarcely prudent to commit myself
More than is necessary.
N. O cruel wisdom!
Are women all so careful of their feelings?
G. Why, what a blundering fellow!
D. What is't, Sir Gregory?
G. Heigh!
N. But when we are married thou wilt love me,
Laura?

L. Yes, when we are married.
N. I can wait for that:
'Tis but two days;—and now we speak of it,
I wish that thou wouldst tell me in what colour
'Twould please thee that I dressed. Or wilt thou come,
O'erlook the suits my tailor has prepared,
And say which pleases best.
L. Sir, since you strike
The very root of the chord, I'll tell you how
You may best please me. There was once a man
I liked, whose custom it was to dress in black:
If you will dress like him . . .
N. In black!

G. (*Laura listens.*) Your ladyship,
I cannot sign this contract—the provision
I look for is not here; the scribe has blundered.
This is no settlement at all. Who drew it?
D. Frederick.
G. Then he's no lawyer. I am surprised
He took this on himself.
L. (*aside*). So, well done, Frederick!
D. 'Tis most provoking. Are you sure, Sir Gregory,
'Tis as you say?
N. (*to Gregory*). Will you not sign the contract?
G. (*rising*). I cannot sign it.

D. There's a flaw, it seems,
In the deed, St. Nicholas: but there's time enough
To have it drawn afresh. Pray come, Sir Gregory,
Come to my study. Here we interrupt
These lovers. [*Beckons G. off. Exeunt D. and G.*

N. Now they are gone, put off this mask.
L. What mask?
N. Thou dost respect the Countess' eye and ear,
And wilt not love when she is by: but now
Give me at least thy hand to kiss.
L. Why no, sir.
N. Say then thou lovest me, sweetest Laura.—
L. Nay, but I do not, sir. I understand
That women love their husbands, and I promise
To love mine when I am married; yes, as well
As any happy woman on this earth
Hath ever loved. Are you content with that?
N. I should be, Laura; but thou dost not speak
As if 'twere true. I could see well enough
Thou wert not sorry when Sir Gregory said
He would not sign. I know thou wilt not love me.
L. Then why, in heaven's name, would you marry me?
N. Because I love thee. But I think no man
Did ever love so cruel and strange a mistress.

L. And you, sir, do no less appear to me
Distrustful and impatient. Prithee go,
Busy yourself to get your clothes in fashion:
In two days is my marriage; after that—

N. Well!

L. After that all shall seem different.

N. I made a sonnet of my love for thee,
And would have given it.

L. Why then did you not?

N. I lost it in the garden.

L. It can't be lost.

N. No. Tristram found it and won't give it up.
He says that Frederick wrote it.

L. Frederick! nonsense, sir!
Some one is coming. Excuse me. [*Exit.*

N. O woman, various woman! thus to treat
The man she loves! and yet how well becomes thee
Thy native wit, when sweetest modesty
Is masked thereby in tart indifference,
Which spurs far more than doting tenderness
The passion it rebuffs. What wit she hath!
My Laura! Wit is admirable in woman,
It is so rare; and 'tis the salt of marriage.

Frederick and Ricardo have re-entered.

R. (*to F.*). Here's our belated bee, let's go elsewhere.

F. Nay, drive him to his hole.
R. How now, St. Nicholas!
Musing, I think, on thy good fortune, eh?
N. Good morning, Frederick, and, sir, how do you?
R. Fairly, I thank thee, fairly: but in presence
Of happiness like thine, mine goes for nothing.
F. Thou hast been honey-gathering early, sir.
N. I will confess it: that was my pursuit.
F. True to thy beeship, thy belated beeship?
N. Sir!
R. I am sure our friend means no offence.
The happy expressions of true genius
Stick in the memory.
F. Yes, sir, it stuck fast,
The Sphinx's tear was somewhat sticky too.
Thou didst not spare us; we were put to shame.
N. Is that a reason, sir, before this stranger
To mock me? I can appreciate ridicule
Prompted by envy at its proper worth.
Affecting to find fault with my expressions!
Good morning, gentlemen. [*Exit.*

R. You poets treat each other vilely.
F. Now, Richard.
R. My scheme is this: I have written to my servants;
They will receive you. Leave to-morrow night,

And you will find all ready: You shall have
Such a reception and fair bridal trim,
And high festivities as shall dress out
The hasty manner of your coming.
F. But first,
How shall I make my escape? I am watched, suspected.
R. I can arrange that too. By my behaviour
And letter to the Countess I have contrived
To win her trust. First I shall praise her scheme
Of sending you to Milan, and then persuade her
To send you again. You must hit on a plan
How to convey your lady to the carriage,
And all is done.
F. What shall I do with Tristram?
R. Leave him to me: my purse will settle him.
F. 'Tis excellently schemed; but if Diana
Press me to tell how I obtained the letter,
What can I say?
R. She is easily put off:
That question does not touch her. Any tale
Will serve.
F. Yet, Richard, what so generously
You do for me must ruin you with her.
Is't possible you are cured!
R. No, no: mistake not!

I am more and more in love: and see my way
By certain steps: and first to get thee married.
Her love for thee is a romance, which I
Can shift upon myself when thou art gone.
And that she loves thee, thee the worthiest,
Dearest and nearest of my earliest friends,
Is no impediment. Is't not half way
To loving me? 'Tis happy for me, Frederick,
Thou hast not seen her worth.

F. And I half question
Whether 'tis not my duty as friend of both
To close with her and save you.

R. Thou dost not know her,
Because, I thank thee for it, thou dost not love her.
And, friend, thy speech is gross; why the truth is
There's not a man or woman on God's earth,
However humble, mean, or ill-appearing,
That hath not in his sight some grace and favour,
Which angels see: but mortals overlook it,
Being spiritually blind: for which affliction
They have suffered half their shames, and slain the just.
But Love, God's gift, is spiritual sight;
'Tis the perception, which man lacks of all,
Given him of one, to see as angels see.
This is man's marriage: and what now I love
Is not, friend, what thou seest,—though thou mayst see

A beauty unparallel'd,—but rather that
Which by love's gift I see: so say no more.
F. Forgive me, Richard: 'tis a just rebuke.
I did speak grossly. 'Tis that artist's pride
Of which you used to warn me: I will confess it.
In my own case I am idealist
At the price of all the world. If I believed
I were as others, I should mock myself.
I have not yet come to that. Now, in my excuse,
Diana is sometimes laughable.
R. And who
Would not be laughable who had his way,
Or if one set his humours on a throne?
F. Well, you will rule her. Still there's room to fear
You may not win her.
R. I doubt not to win:
At least if you'll be gone.
F. Trust me to go.

Re-enter Diana with papers in hand. Laura and Flora.

D. Frederick!
F. Your ladyship!
D. This settlement
Is but waste paper. Didst thou draw it thyself?
F. I did, your ladyship.
D. Then pray explain.
F. If I have made any error . . .

D. Error, sir!
The lady is here left wholly unprovided.
And if Sir Gregory had not by good fortune
Studied the terms, but trusted to thy skill,
He had left his daughter penniless.
F. There is full time
To draw it afresh. I humbly crave your pardon
For my mistake.
D. Stay, I have more against thee.
I will proceed in form. We have an audience:
Stand upon thy defence. I am the plaintiff,
The accuser; and, Ricardo, be thou judge.
Hear all. This gentleman hath been my secretary
Now for twelve months. In all my affairs I have set
No limit to my trust: I have ever shewn him
Absolute confidence: and yet how think you
Hath he repaid me? He hath lied to me.
I accuse him here to his face before you all.
He said to-day he had been last night to Milan
And brought me a letter, when he had never been there,
And had not brought it. Contradict me, sir,
If I say wrong. You hear he is silent. Now
I say he forged that letter.
F. Silence, my lady,
Is the answer fittest for a charge too gross

To be denied.

D. Then tell me by what means
The letter came to thee. Still silent. I hope
Thou dost mark that, Ricardo.

F. In my defence
I say I have served your ladyship as well
As you have trusted me: and for this matter,—
You gave me a letter for the Duke of Milan
Requiring speedy answer. I procured
That answer in good time.

D. Ah, but thou saidst
That thou thyself didst bear it, as I bade thee.
Silent? Now here's a secret; there's some matter
Withheld from me which I have a right to know.
I have cause to think thou hast upon thy person
The explanation. I would see what papers
Thou carriest with thee.

F. I have no papers, madam,
Such as you look to find.

D. Thou sayst that letter
Was not a forgery. I wish to see
If something which I think is in thy pocket
Is not a forgery.

F. If on first appearance
Of having wronged you, you mistrust me thus,
There is no cure. Demand my papers from me:

I cannot take them back.

D. I do demand them.

F. You shall have everything in perfect order
Before this evening.

D. Stay! I wish to see
What papers thou hast with thee.

F. Very well.
This is the only pocket in my dress;
Here the contents. (*Offers a few letters.*)

D. Is that the only pocket?
I thought there was another little pocket
On the left side.

F. (*aside*). Ah! 'tis that villain Tristram
Hath told her this.

D. What say you, sir? Is't true?
No answer. Now I think the explanation
Lies in that pocket. If I am wrong, 'tis easy
To prove me so. But if thou hast a secret . . .

F. I have a secret, and you are well informed
I carry it on me. And to prove to all
'Tis of a private nature, I will shew it.
'Tis but this little case. (*Shews case of portrait.*)

D. A portrait-case?

F. A portrait.

D. Ah, then, now we have the truth:
Thou art in love. This is the wondrous sickness

That keeps thee at home when I would send thee forth:
Distracted thee in drawing of the deed . . .

F. Enough, my lady; you have pushed this far enough.

D. Oh no! I have now another charge of falsehood.

I have long suspected this; and yesterday
When I did ask thee if thou wert in love,
Thou didst deny it. But thou dost not now—
So tell me who the lady is.

L. (*aside to R.*). All's lost!

F. (*coming quite to front*). Your ladyship must grant me in private conduct
Some liberty: my honest duty and service
Never surrendered that, and should avail
To spare me this ungenerous inquisition.

D. And very well, sir, if thou hast not transgressed
The rules of the court: these art thou bound to observe:
And these, as well thou knowest, forbid my ladies
To hide their love affairs from me. Dark meetings,
Intrigue, sly correspondence, and the rest,
Are treason here; nay, they are so well forbidden,
That to conceal them is a breach of trust.
Give me thy word then, Frederick, that this portrait
Is not of any lady in my court,
I'll ask no more.—But if she is of the court,

I'll know who it is. Now speak, and quit thyself.

F. I will not say whether it is so or no.

D. That is confession. I must see the portrait. Ricardo, now thy judgment.

R. I fear, my lady,
I have too short acquaintance with the rules
Appealed to; and if I offer you my judgment
By such unwritten statutes as obtain
In the best circles that I know, for instance,
The court of Milan . . .

D. What is the court of Milan?
Are we not here at Belflor?—You know the rules, Laura; speak for me.

L. He must shew the portrait.
(*Coming forward to F.*)
(*Aside.*) All's lost unless I do it.
(*To F.*) Sir, give it to me.
Judgment hath gone against you. I can promise
No eye shall learn thy secret but the Countess.
To her 'tis due. So give her up the portrait.
(*Aside to F.*) I will exchange them.—

F. gives L. the portrait: which the spectators see her exchange for another. She turns, and, going to D., presents her with that.

D. (*taking*). I thank thee, Laura; and now to learn the secret!

Who is this wanton traitress? (*Opens case.*)
Ah!—ha! ha!
Impossible,—'tis true. Who would believe it?
Why, friends, there is no secret after all:
No lady,—'tis himself.—
He carries a portrait of himself; himself
Leaning upon his elbow. Now, heaven save me!
This I was told; but tho' my own eyes see it,
I cannot credit it. O, gracious sir,
I have wronged thee, and beg pardon. Yet, I think,
Thou losest in acquittal. O Frederick, Frederick!
Although thou art a poet, and mayst think
Thou hast a touch of rarer stuff, to make thee
Self-centred;—nay, tho' thou wert more than that,
More than I ever thought thee . . .
To carry thine own portrait! to have a pocket
For it! well, well! 'tis a fair picture enough,
Not undeserving of its jewelled case.
Poor little image! now I'm sorry for thee;
Thou hast no lady-lover, but must live
In thine own pocket, as it were.—Let me have thee,
I'll keep thee—may I not, Frederick?—a remembrance
Of better hopes. Come, Laura: doth your poet
Carry his portrait, too? He is distanced quite.
[*Exit D. and L. with Flora.*

F. By heaven, well saved!

R. What is't? I understand not.
'Twas your own portrait?

F. Yes; but that I had
Was Laura's. She having mine, stepped in between,
And interchanged them.

R. I never saw it. Bravo!—most deftly done.

F. 'Twas touch and go. That meddling devil, Tristram,
He must have told her of it.

Re-enter Laura.

L. The Countess, Frederick,
Bids me return the portrait. You may die
To look on it, she says,—here 'tis. (*Giving her own.*)

F. Be sure
This is the right one. Well: she says not ill. (*Kissing it.*)

L. I tremble still.

F. O, you did well.

L. To-night
Be in the park again—under my window—
I am set to watch for you.

F. You!

L. Yes,—by Diana.
Eleven,—I dare not stay. Farewell till then. [*Exit.*

F. Well, there's the end of it, Richard.

R. Yes: and 'tis plain

She never really loved you. Yet, if I am right,
Here's a new difficulty arisen. Diana,
If she believes this nonsense, will no longer
Be jealous for you; and I shall never manage
To get you off to Milan.

F. 'Tis worse than ever.
What can we do?

R. 'Tis best I undeceive her,
And set things as they were. Her jealousy
Is ground to work on; but this foolery
Is bottomless.

Re-enter Flora.

Fl. (*to R.*). Her ladyship has sent
To beg you await her, sir. She hath a matter
To speak of with you in private.

R. Bear my respects
Back to your mistress;—say I await her here.

[*Exit Flora.*

See how I prosper. Get you gone, while I
Step in your shoes.

F. Richard, do not be rash:
And if you find she is cured, leave well alone.

R. Trust me: in serving you I serve myself.

[*Exit F.*

Diana hath not been honestly in love.

If 'twere the virtual Frederick she adored
She could not so mistake him. 'Tis but fancy,
Which jealousy hath magnified to passion:
And now she eyes him as the fox the grapes,
And rather than be crossed, she'll be persuaded
That he's an idiot. That's not honest love,—
Fanciful consolations are the comfort
Of fancied passion,—love needs better food.

Re-enter Diana.

D. How now, Ricardo? I have not done laughing yet.
What of my ingenious secretary? I think
'Tis well I trapped him: we might else have searched
For a lady long enough.

R. You are satisfied
By this discovery?

D. Clearly; all is explained.
I came to tell you the campaign is over.
Finding there's nought to seek, the search is ended.
The wonder is, Tristram had solved the mystery,
And told me; but I laughed.

R. Now you believe?

D. Ha! ha!

R. How you must now despise him!

D. I do, indeed.

R. You laugh. 'Tis strange that it should please you.

D. Ah!
I laugh to think there was no cause for all
My . . .
R. Your . . .
D. My needless trouble, my anxiety.
R. Anxiety,—you mean, lest? . . .
D. For my maids.
R. (*half-aside*). Indeed!—indeed!
D. 'Twas more than laughable
To see him; and you there with your face so grave.
R. I thought you were deceived.
D. I was deceived,
But now I understand.
R. Your ladyship,
I think, is more mistaken now than ever.
Frederick hath told me himself that he is in love;
And that's the truth, both likely, and well-confirmed,
Even by the accident you set against it.
You find on him a portrait of himself
Set in a jewelled case; just such a gift
As he might make to his lady. I know, from him,
He hath her picture.
D. Ah! you have seen it?
R. No.
D. Then I am assured there is no other picture
Than that I saw. His servant guessed the truth:

'Twas part of a pretence, for which I think
There may be a cause. There is no lady at all.

R. Tristram's a fool; and wrests what wit he hath
To outwit himself.

D. What then do you believe?

R. I see the stroke your ladyship prepared
Was excellent: the merest chance in the world
Enabled him to escape.

D. Impossible.
This is a dream. Besides, how could he dare
Deceive me again, and wish me to believe
That he is a fool?

R. A false opinion wrongs
The holder most.

D. Never! I cannot think it.

R. You do not wish to think it.

D. And what dost thou, sir,
Think that I wish?

R. One thing at least is clear . . .

D. (*aside*). Good heaven! if I have betrayed myself—
Well, sir!

R. You are vexed to think Frederick should be in love.

D. How so, pray?—how should I be vexed at that?

R. The fear to lose so good a secretary.

D. So good a secretary!—Ha! now, Ricardo,

I am vexed, that's the truth, at Frederick's love.—
I see how likely it is you are right—I am sorry—
I do not wish to believe it: I thought at first
His lady, whoever she was, might be in the town:
Or, if the affair had sprung within my court,
It might be one of my guests: but now it happens
We have no visitors. If last night he kept
An appointment here in the court,—who can it be
But one of the maids? Are you surprised I am vexed?
I thought well of him, and still would think the best:
I'll not believe it.

R. (*aside*). I shall not act this out.
I almost dare to tell her all: she tortures
Herself for nothing.—I cannot . . .

D. What say you, sir?

R. 'Tis out of the question, madam.

D. Nay, tell not me.
I know what men will do.

R. If you believe it,
There's but one plan.

D. And that?

R. To send him away.

D. To send him away? Of course I might; I'll do it:
To-night, Ricardo.

R. (*aside*). Now we go too fast—

The sooner he goes the better: and yet your plan
Was good, to watch to-night. Now that he thinks
Suspicion lulled too, he will be more rash.
Let Lady Laura watch the garden, and I
His room: even if that fail, 'tis time enough
To send him off to-morrow.

D. ... I thought when I came in here, Ricardo,
I had come to the end of the matter: I find instead
'Tis ten times more involved, doubtful, and difficult.
For after this exposure, if Frederick stayed,
Our mutual trust is sapped: and if, as you urge,
I send him away, there's none to take his place.
Nor can I do without him. In two days hence
The wedding is fixed, for which a host of guests
Are bid to the house. Sir Gregory being so deaf
Would be overwhelmed: Frederick cannot be spared.
Yet would he stay if I asked him? Did you hear him
Threaten he would not take his papers back?
He sees, no doubt, how necessary he is.

R. No doubt, my lady, he sees that when he is gone
He cannot be here to help you.

D. Who can help me?
What is your counsel?

R. Not to ask a favour
Of one whom you so hotly have charged with wrong.

D. I would not.

R. Sir Gregory then must do his best.
D. 'Tis no solution that.
R. Then what, my lady,
If I should take the place awhile? I offer
My service, I would do my best.
D. I thank you,
Ricardo. I hardly like to accept; and yet
You have come to know much that I could not tell
To another.
R. (*aside*). I win. But she must ask me herself.
D. I think I might accept.—What say you?
R. My lady,
I see one difficulty,—I have offered more
Than is quite my own: for being the Duke's servant
I cannot without his leave give pledge to another.
D. Cannot you get his leave?
R. Yes. I will ask it.
And what if Frederick be our messenger?
Send him again to Milan; the very mission
That he played false in: so your dignity
Is salved and explanation saved.
D. 'Tis good.
To-morrow he goes. If you will act in his place—
For some ten days, say?
R. Longer, if it should please you.
D. I thank you, I shall not need it.

R. But if . . .

D. If what?

R. If Frederick should resign, and if the Duke
Gave me permission, might I keep my place?

D. I thank you, sir; I hope there'll be no need.

R. But may I hope?

D. In truth I know of none
I'd rather see in his place.

R. A thousand thanks!

D. Why thank me so, sir? I am here the obliged.

R. Your ladyship knows not the great desire
I have felt to serve her.

D. I am happy to have inspired it.
It comes to me as a sort of consolation
In my distress—

R. Agreed then that to-night
We watch. If nothing come of that, to-morrow
Frederick is sent to Milan with my letter.
Only your ladyship must be prepared
To lose him. Whoever it is he loves, I am sure
When we discover her, we shall find a passion
Worthy and deep, from which he'll not be moved:
Therefore . . .

D. O, you are mistaken. I know him better.
I know he is cold. Well, well: I thank you. I wish you
Good-evening, sir.—To-morrow speak we of this—

But I have been much deceived.—Be not concerned,
'Tis nothing. [*Faints.*

R. (*supporting her to a chair*). Flora!—Here is a chair, my lady,

You are over-wrought (*Aside.*) By heaven, what brutes we are!
'Twere kinder far to tell her at once—Diana!
Dearest Diana! (*Aside.*) What am I doing?—Flora! Flora!

Re-enter Flora.

Fl. My lady in one of her fits!

R. What is it? Look at her, Flora!

Fl. To fan her face,—that's all.
She will come to herself. See, see!

R. (*aside*). This lump 's not fit to touch her.—
My lady!—Diana!

D. (*awakening*). Who's there? Ah, Flora!

Fl. My lady
Has fainted again.

D. Ricardo!—yes, I remember.
How foolish.

Fl. All's well, my lady.

D. (*to Fl.*). Give me an arm.
I'll go within.

R. Cannot I help you?

D. Oh, no.
'Tis nothing,—a silly habit I wish I were rid of.
I thank you. Good evening, sir.

R. Good evening, madam.
I promise to bring this all to a happy end.

D. I thank you, sir: I would you might. So, Flora.
[*Exit with Fl.*

R. Now, by my soul, Frederick's atrocious!
'Tis brutal of him. He has let this go too far.
She loves him much too well. Good heaven! to think
He might have had her. I owe him everything
For being so blind, and eager for his marriage
With Lady Laura. Yes, and thanks to her
For being so ready; and to St. Nicholas
For setting her on: for he in the end appears
As my good genius, tho' he little dreams it.
So far, all prospers—all is in good train.
To-morrow will decide my fate.

ACT · III

SCENE · 1

A hall on the first floor of the Palace: stairs at the back leading down. A lamp burning below shines on to the stage.

Enter TRISTRAM and FLORA hurriedly (R.).

FLORA.

FLY, Tristram, down the stairs: she is coming.

TRISTRAM.

O, wala! wala! If she has seen us—

Fl. Quick! And dout the lamp. [*Exit* R.

T. O, wala! wala!

[*Exit down the stairs, back, making a great noise; the lamp suddenly goes out.*

Enter Diana in robe-de-chambre, with a lamp in her hand.

DIANA.

Stop, sir! stop, stop! I see you: I bid you stop. Flora, Flora!—I'll ring the alarm. [*Pulls a rope.* Will no one come?

Enter Ricardo (L.).

RICARDO.

I heard your ladyship call.

D. He is here, Ricardo: I heard him, I saw him.

R. Where?

D. He ran off down the stairs. Follow him and seize him.

Bring him back here. Quick!

R. Down the stairs?

D. Quick, quick!

[*Exit R. at back.*

Is this the way I am treated? and not a servant! Flora! Come, Flora! Flora! is no one awake?

Enter (L.) *St. Nicholas hurriedly, half-dressed, carrying suits of clothes, a dressing-case, etc.*

D. Stay, sir! where go you?

ST. NICHOLAS.

Fire! fire! The palace is on fire! Fly, fly!

D. Stay, sir, I say: the house is not on fire.

N. Where is the fire? Mercy! O, heaven save me!

D. There is no fire at all.

N. No fire! Are you sure?

D. I rang the bell myself to awake the house.

A man broke in.

N. Thieves? Robbers?

D. I do not know.

He has got away. Go, wake Sir Gregory.

N. (*going*). First let me fetch my sword!

D. Nonsense, St. Nicholas; we need no swords.

Go, wake Sir Gregory, and send him here:

Send him at once. [*Exit N.* (L.)

Re-enter Ricardo (*back*).

Were you too late, Ricardo? 2160

Did you not catch him? Has he escaped?

R. In the dark,

Whoever it was, had passed the door before me,

And, like a hare, faster than I could follow,

Sped o'er the grass into the house.

D. You saw him?

Where went he in?

R. At Frederick's door. I reached it

In time to hear the key turn in the lock.

D. 'Tis he, then, and escaped in spite of us.

But I'll find out with whom he dares . . .

R. (*aside*). 'Twas the fool Tristram:

I saw him plainly enough. Should I not tell her?—

D. Ricardo, go and fetch Sir Gregory; 2171

I have sent St. Nicholas for him, but the man

Is scared with terror.

R. (*aside*). While all goes well with me, the less I meddle
The better. I'll let her find this out herself.

[*Exit* (L.)

D. I'll ring the bell again.

Enter the Maids (R.).

So here you crawl at last! I had better keep
No maids at all than such a drowsy troop.
Not frightened by the fire-bell! You must have
Wondrous good consciences. Now, tell me at once—
There was a man outside my chamber-door
Laughing and talking. Answer at once!—who was it?
Who was it was here? 2181

DOROTHY.

I heard my lady call;
But did not think that it could be my lady
At such an hour.

D. Nay: I should be asleep
Of course, but I was not.

Enter Gregory and Ricardo (L.).

My major-domo
At last. Come in, Sir Gregory, come: you are wanted.

Sir GREGORY.

I am shocked, your ladyship, at what hath happened:
Ricardo hath told me. But there seems no doubt
The unknown intruder hath escaped. Be sure
You may retire in safety, without fear
Of being disturbed again. I will go round
And see that all's secure. To-morrow morning
There shall be full inquiry.

D. To-morrow? Nay,
I do not leave this spot till I know all.
I guess who 'tis.

G. I pray your ladyship
Retire. The cold air of the hall, the excitement
At such an hour may harm your ladyship.

D. No. If I die I'll learn the truth at once.
I know else how 'twill be. You'll go to bed
And sleep till noon; and when you wake you'll say
'Twas all delusion, that I never heard
A man at all. That what Ricardo saw
Was but a bush, a shadow, a bat, an owl
He frighted from the ivy: and so in the end
All will make light of it.

G. Heigh! Give me a light.
The lamp has been extinguished on the stairs.
I'll go and search about.

[*Takes a light from one of the maids, and Exit, back.*

R. (*aside*). I'll stay and watch.

D. Now, ye dissemblers, stand forth one by one
And answer me.

R. (*aside*). This will seal Frederick's fate.
She must betray her mean suspicion, and I,
Witness the degradation of her idol.—

(*The maids are congregated at back,* R. *as they come out of the passage. They stand forth singly to be questioned, and come in turn to front,* R.)

D. Dorothy first. Dost thou know, Dorothy,
What man it was whose voice I heard up-stairs;
Who, when I left my room and gave the alarm,
Ran out?

Dor. I do not know, my lady.

D. I ask
Didst thou not see or hear him?

Dor. No, my lady.

D. Thou wert asleep?

Dor. I was asleep, my lady.

D. Then stand aside. Now, Kate.

Dor. (*aside*). Here's a fine game!

D. Sawst thou or heardst thou anything?

KATE.

No, my lady.

D. Nothing at all?

K. Nothing at all, my lady.

D. Wert thou asleep?

K. I was asleep, my lady.

D. Step thou aside. Now, Flora.

K. (*to Dor.*). Will she lie?

Dor. (*to K.*). Trust her.

D. Now, Flora, answer.

Fl. I am grieved my lady
Should think I could deceive her.

D. I did not ask
If you deceived me. Heard you any noise?
Did you see any man?

Fl. Not I, my lady.

Dor. (*aside to K.*). Oh! oh!

D. Were you asleep?

Fl. I was asleep, my lady.

D. Then stand aside.

Fl. (*aside to K.*). Did she believe me?

K. (*to Fl.*). Well!
Thou'st got a brazen face!

Dor. (*do.*). Art thou not shamed?

D. Marcela next. Didst thou hear anything?

MARCELA.

I heard no noise until my lady called.

D. Thou wert asleep?

Mar. I was asleep, my lady.
D. 'Tis strange. Stand thou aside.
Dor. (*aside*). Now then for Rose.
Mar. (*do.*). She really was asleep.
Fl. (*do.*). Then what shall come?
D. Now, Rose, thou'rt left alone. Thy fellow-servants
Have all denied the thing of which some one
At least is guilty. Thee I did not suspect:
But do not fear to tell the truth. Who was it?
Tell me who is thy lover. No tittering there!
Your levity makes you all accomplices,
Ay, every one.

ROSE.

My lady, I have no lover.
D. Tell me who this man was.
Rose. I do not know.
I heard no noise till Marcela awoke me.
D. Didst thou awake her, Marcela?
Mar. Yes, my lady.
She was asleep. Rose always speaks the truth.
It wasn't Rose.
D. You are all then in one plot:
Or shame has made you lie. But never think
To escape. I know the gentleman, and know

He visits one of you: and which it is
I'll learn to-night: unless perhaps you'll say
He makes love to you all.
Mar. Indeed, my lady,
He is quite a proper man.
Dor. And all his courtship
Has been most regular.
D. Come, come: confess.
Who is it?
Fl. It's me, my lady. I must confess.
D. Flora!
Fl. Forgive me, I beg; for I abjure
I never asked him: but, as I often tell him,
He takes such liberties; which, as you know him,
I need not tell your ladyship: and 'tis true
We have been some time engaged.
D. Engaged!—to you!
Here's a fine story!
R. (*aside*). She has not said his name.
Fl. Indeed, 'tis true, my lady; and I am sure
My lady will pardon me. And since he hath told me
How kind your ladyship hath been to him . . .
D. By heaven, I'll have you whipped,—whipped!
Fl. O, my lady!
D. And speak of marriage, you impertinent hussy!
Fl. It was the money which your ladyship gave him,

That made us think of marrying.

D. Worse and worse!
To spend my present on my waiting-maid.—
O thy pretension! thy pretension! Think you
He really loves you?

Fl. Why not?

Maids. Ay, why not?

D. What hath he ever said to make you think
He loves you, Flora?

Fl. He told me very often,
Before I'd have him . . .

D. Ah!

Kate. And that I warrant.
He's not one of your struck-dumb mumbling sort,
That haven't a word.

D. Silence! And tell me, Flora,
Something he has said.

Fl. He calls me his little love,—his duck:
And says a hundred thousand pretty things
As often as we meet.

D. A hundred thousand!
His compliments are cheap. Duck, too!

Fl. My lady,
'Tis what men say. It does not mean a duck.

Kate. 'Tis true, my lady; 'tis a common saying.

D. Silence! No one of you dare from this moment

To speak to me. You are all alike disgraced.
And, that you are not more shamed, disgraced the more.
I shall discharge you all.

Kate. What! and Rose too!

D. To-morrow morning. But, Flóra, for you
I cannot think of punishment sufficient.
Merely to have had a lover,—to have concealed it,—
To have even admitted him by night,—were nothing,
Had the affair been . . .

Re-enter Sir Gregory up the stairs with Tristram's hat, holding it up.

G. Found on the stairs,—the intruder's hat, my lady:
He had thrown it on the lamp to extinguish it,
And thereby is detected.

R. (*aside*). Now 's revelation.

D. Why,—but whose hat is this?

Fl. 'Tis his, my lady.

R. Is not this Tristram's hat?

D. (*aside*). Hath he come hither in his servant's clothes?

Fl. It's Tristram's hat.

K. At least what's left of it.

D. Came he disguised?

Fl. 'Twas thus, my lady. As he ran down the stairs,
I bade him dout the lamp. I did not mean
That he should burn his hat.
D. (*aside*). What can this be?
It can't have been Tristram.—Answer me, Flora:
Was it master Tristram visited you to-night?
Fl. Of course, my lady. I'd not deny it.
D. (*aside*). I see!
After all, only Tristram.—Came he alone?
Answer me at once.
Fl. I am much ashamed, my lady,
He came alone. And yet, my lady, I swear
I never bade him; nor asked him, for that matter.
I heard his step, and found him waiting there
By the big clock. How he came in I know not.
D. Enough: I shall discover. All leave but Flora.
[*Exeunt maids except Fl.*
(*Aside.*) Thank heaven they have not guessed . . . and
yet how nearly
My jealousy betrayed me! (*To Fl.*) I told you, Flora,
I shall discharge you. Tho' I do not doubt
Tristram came here without your invitation,
Yet in concealing his pretensions from me
You have disobeyed,—deceived me.
Fl. I was afraid
My lady would forbid him.

D. Silence, girl!
Go to your room. I'll speak of this to-morrow.
Fl. I hope my lady will forgive his boldness.
I have told my lady all.
D. Begone! begone! [*Exit Fl.*
(*To R.*) What think you of this, Ricardo?
R. 'Tis the wrong fox we have hunted.
D. Ah, I think
Fox is the word. I half believe that Frederick
And Tristram are in league.
R. I guessed the truth
When Flora first confessed.
D. I was too hot.
R. You think too ill of Frederick.
D. Nay, Ricardo:
Do not defend him. 'Tis enough to shame him
That Tristram is his servant.
G. I pray my lady
Will now retire.
D. Yes, true, Sir Gregory.
'Tis time, high time. And let this trophy here
Be sent to its owner; and to-morrow morning
Bid him come speak with me. Tell him, Ricardo.
Good-night. [*Exit Gregory lighting her out,* R.
R. I am now secure of her: since in my presence
She hath so consented to disgrace her idol.

He is quite dethroned: she knows too that I know.
He is past recovery. Could she but have seen him
Walking with Laura in the garden, plotting
Their flight to-morrow! And I to climb by such
A ladder of comedy, tottering with laughter,
To love's very heaven! After three years of pain
Three days of farce, disguise, and folly; and then,
Suddenly win my joy!

Re-enter Sir Gregory.

And thou, Sir Gregory,
Shalt be my major-domo.

G. Eigh!

R. (*taking his arm*). I say,
Sir Gregory, I'll have you for my major-domo.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE 2

Frederick's room; open portmanteaus, &c. lying about. Near the fireplace R. *is a cupboard with key in lock. A table in centre.*

Enter FREDERICK *carrying music, and* TRISTRAM.

FREDERICK.

All my clothes are in, you say, Tristram?

TRISTRAM.

Everything, sir.

F. You pack well, Tristram: put in these. (*handing music.*) Is there room for the music?

T. Anything, sir. Lie there, ye wrigglers. (*begins to sing to himself*)

F. And this book.

T. Where is it you may be going, if you please, sir?

F. Never mind. You pack very well, Tristram. I shall miss you.

T. If the Countess has sent you to Milan, will you not want your best black velvet doublet?

F. I shall wear that on the journey.

T. Wear your best black velvet on the road! Well! —Stay we long away, sir?

F. Never mind. Now shut it up and give me the key.

T. I should like to know, sir, how long we stay away, and when we are to start.

F. Give me the key. Now, Tristram, I understand that the Countess has dismissed you from her household. That saves me explanation. Here's your wages (*puts money on the table*) for the current quarter. You are no more my servant.

T. Good heavens! do you discharge me, sir? I beg,
what have I done to offend you?

F. Never mind.
The Countess has discharged you,—that's enough.
Tho' you're a fool, Tristram, to say the truth,
I have got accustomed to you, and shall be sorry
To part with you. I have quite as many reasons
For wishing you to stay, as you have given me
To be dissatisfied. But so 'tis fated;
And what God willeth, Tristram, *needs must be,*
After the opinion of certain clerkës.

T. I am not to go with you to-day to Milan?

F. No, Tristram. Now we part.

T. Consider, sir,
That Flora is discharged as well as me:
Cannot you take us with you?

F. You and Flora
With me!

T. What shall we do, sir? What shall we do?

F. I'll tell you what. While you were in my service
You served me ill, pried into my affairs,
Took bribes to spy upon me:—I know,—attend.
If you would win my favour, you must serve me
Now you are discharged. You can assist me, and if
You serve me better, I'll use my interest, Tristram,
To get you a decent place.

T. What is't to do?

F. 'Tis this. An hour from hence I must be off.
St. Nicholas will likely enough be here
After his marriage settlement. Now, Tristram,
He must not find me. Wait for him here:—do you see?—
And if he comes, get him out of the way.
And if Ricardo comes, tell him that I
Am gone to seek him and shall soon return:
Bid him await me here. If by your help
I get off quickly, I will help you; if not,
Tristram, I'll cut your throat from ear to ear. [*Exit.*

T. Heavens! what has possessed my master, and what's to happen to me? O wala, wala! It all comes of love: or rather, I should say, it all came of my hat. I would it had been consumed entirely. This hole in the crown is not to be mended . . . . . and all round 'tis like tinder, it breaks with a touch. Of what contemptible material are these hats made! It might have been sewn up else. Now 'tis a picture of me. Yes, the hat is me, as it were; the hole in the crown is the ruin of my fortunes wrought upon me by the fiery lamp, which is my love for Flora. There's a parable. Could I write a poem on this, it might appease the Countess. Deary me! What are Flora and I to do? Money being

the root of all evil, I must look first to that. All depends on that. Let me see what I can muster. There's my pay; there's the Countess' present, and my little savings. (*turns out his purse and pockets on to the table.*) I'll put it all in heaps of ten. No, heaps of five: better in fives, there'll be more heaps; and there's comfort in the number of heaps. Tho' less lordly, 'twill be more showy. Five, ten, fifteen, twenty. (*knocking at door.*) Come in,—twenty-five.

Enter St. Nicholas.

ST. NICHOLAS.

Tristram! Where's your master?

T. Twenty-five. My master's no more. Twenty-six.

N. Frederick is dead?

T. (*singing*). What dead, my dearie?

Oh no, my dearie.

N. What is this nonsense, Tristram?

T. When I meet with a poet, St. Nicholas, I can speak poetry.

N. I came to see your master, Tristram; and you said he was dead.

T. I said he was no more, not that he was dead: and, as I say, he is no more my master. I am, as 'twere, a gentleman at large; and I sit here by invita-

tion, engaged on my own affairs, which do not need assistance.

N. I came to see your master on important business, Tristram. Be civil enough to tell me where he is.

T. My master is nowhere. This was twenty-six.

N. I shall wait for him here.

T. Well, if you choose to wait, I know what you come after. 'Tis not the sonnet.

N. When will Frederick be back, Tristram?

T. But I'll give you back your sonnet, if you will write me a poem about my hat, this hat. 'Tis but to versify my own imaginations. See! I am the hat: the hole in it is my discharge: the flame which burnt the hole is Flora,—that's the Countess' maid. All is good. There's the blackness of the hat, the fire of the lamp, the abysm of the hole: it lacks but the moon, which you might shift to see through the crown; and if you could weave in with that your sphinx and something about death, I think that I might tickle the Countess' ear to reconsider of my discharge; for she loves poetry.

N. Curse thy impertinence, Tristram. Where's thy master?

T. I will shew you where your master is, if you curse me or aught of mine, master Nick.

N. Darst thou speak to me thus? 2460

T. Did you not call me a thief, and base-born clown?

N. Art thou not both?

T. Whate'er I be, Mr. Poet, I have now no master, nor any obligation to any gentleman to make believe for his convenience that thou art aught. Thou! Why thy brainpan hath nought in it but shoddy, I warrant. Thou combed ass! thou left-handed goose!—to curse me!

N. By heaven, I cannot away with thee.

T. No, that you can't. (*Aside.*) I have it. I'll shut him in the screeky cupboard.—Well, sir: I know what you come after. 'Tis the marriage papers, is it not? I was bid see to them. Look in that cupboard.

N. Ah! are they there? (*Goes to cupboard and looks in. T. pushes him behind, and shuts door on him, locking it.*)

T. There curse me, and seek your papers.—(*Aside.*) I think I have him now. If this does not satisfy my master, I'll never try to please him again.

N. (*within*). Let me out at once. There are no papers here. What did you shut me in here for?

T. To follow your occupation—to lounge, lounge in the cupboard. Am I a thief?

N. Let me out, I beg of you, Tristram.

T. Not till you have made my poem, or told me a cure for the rheumatics. Ay, bawl and kick: I

will finish my accounts. Kick away, one for each pile. Twenty-six it was: twenty-seven, twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty. Why you overdo it: you kick by the ducat. With three and a half, (*pocketing.*) thirty-three ducats and a half. Silence! silence! 'Tis more kicks than half-pence, as they say. If you will be quiet, I will give you back your sonnet. (*Takes it out and reads*)—

Master of mine, remember for pitie.

Ha! who's your master now?—I will recite the end part, which I have never read.

Once in a vesture of pale crimson came
That willowed Archdelight, whose eyes are dim
With gazing on a book of writhing flame:

My stars! and no wonder neither.

And with him Hope, the stringless harp-player,
Himself an embelem, harped in mine ear
His long-lost Sapphic song and nuptial hymn.

Hem! Very good, sir, as far as it goes. You should finish this and have it ready by the wedding. See! I will thrust it to you under the door. Won't you take it back? If I have not charmed him to sleep with his own verses! Ha! he bites—he lives. (*N. pulls it to him from within.*) (*To himself.*) This is very well. But I wonder why my master wished him out of the way;

and why he is sent to Milan; and taking all these things with him; and why he is travelling in that doublet. He hath no care for his clothes. Yet I'll do him a last service, and brush it for him. 'Tis sadly dusty (*having taken it down*). He shall not say that his old valet neglected him in aught. So lie there. (*puts doublet on table.*) Pockets full, of course. If I were a gentleman, I'd have no pockets. How can velvet lie? How can one smoothe it down, stuffed out in a lump like this . . an old handkerchief, I'll warrant . . . . no . . a glove: a lady's glove: a very secret affair: one he hath stolen to write verses on. I shall tell the Countess of this. (*Knocking at the door heard.*) This will be Mister Ricardo, I suppose. Come in!

Enter Sir Gregory.

GREGORY.

Tristram, where's your master? Not at home?

T. shakes his head.

G. Do you know where he is?

T. shakes.

G. Has St. Nicholas been here? 2530

T. nods.

G. Is he gone?

T. nods.

N. (*kicking harder*). Sir Gregory! Sir Gregory! I am here!

G. Do you expect your master soon?

T. nods.

G. I may sit and await him?

(*T. bows and gives a chair. G. sits to table. T. takes doublet from table. The glove falls on the floor. G. takes out papers, and lays them on the table to read them.*)

T. (*hanging up doublet*). Now shall the cupboard-door speak to the old gentleman. (*pretends to busy himself. N. makes a great knocking.*)

G. Come in! There is some one at the door, Tristram.

T. shakes.

G. I think there is. (*goes to the door and opens it: finds no one, and returns.*)

(*Aside.*) Frederick is unaccountably remiss,
Most unaccountably remiss.—
Tristram, I am sure I hear a noise. What is it?

T. (*going up to G., shouts in his ear*).
They are sweeping the chimney in the next room, Sir Gregory.

G. Ah.—You would much oblige me, Tristram, if you would go and seek your master, and tell him that I am here.

T. (*nodding*). I can't refuse, and I've done my duty by St. Nicholas. Yet 'tis sad to miss any of this play. I will go, and be back in a trice. (*Passing the cupboard, to N.*) Thou silly! he'll never mind thee.

N. Curse you, Tristram!

T. Hush thee, my babe. *Exit.*

G. (*walks about restlessly*).

The man's as strange as his master. How Diana
Can trust her affairs to one so wholly unfit,
So unmethodical! And what discomfort
The fellow lives in. The room in such disorder:
He might be going away for good. Two such
Immense portmanteaux. What's all that for now?
There is something going on that I do not know of . . .
Tristram's discharged . . that's true. (*sees glove on floor; and picks it up mechanically to put it on the table.*) A lady's glove!
Yes, 'tis a lady's; thrown upon the floor.
What see I? that embroidery . . 'Tis Laura's;
Laura's. St. Nicholas hath been here.—
No, no. Yet the only other explanation . . .
It cannot be . . . I see it all . . 'Tis true.
Her tears and strange farewell to me this morning:
Her treatment of St. Nicholas, and Frederick,
Why he mistook the contract . . . these portmanteaux.—

By heaven, by heaven, there's no time to lose:
They're off. (*going out, passes close to cupboard. N. makes more noise than ever.*)
Ha!—Heigh!
'Tis here, then: not in the chimney. Eh!—who's here?
(*Opens cupboard.*) St. Nicholas!
N. O, Sir Gregory, you would not hear.
G. Who shut you in the cupboard?
N. Tristram.
G. Tristram?
N. assents.
G. And is this Laura's glove? Look at it.
N. (*nodding*). It is.
G. Then tell me: did you bring it here? Could you
By any chance have dropped it here?
N. (*disclaiming by gesture*). I? No, sir.
I came to seek for Frederick.
G. (*to himself*). What can this mean,
Unless to keep his rival out of the way?—
Listen, St. Nicholas, I have discovered something
Concerns you nearly.—I think—I am sure—
Nay: I'll not tell you what I suspect . .
'Tis but suspicion. But you have been, I fear,
Most shamefully beguiled.
N. Ay, that I was.

He said that I should find my settlement,
In the cupboard.

G. Patience. I will go to Laura
And learn the truth. Meanwhile, seek out the Countess,
And beg her give me an interview at once.
I'll come to the ante-chamber. By heaven, St. Nicholas . .
And yet I scarce know . . . There's no time to lose:
Come quickly. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE · 3

A room in the Palace.

DIANA and FREDERICK.

DIANA.

You say you start at once.

FREDERICK.

The coach is waiting.

D. Here is my letter: give it to the Duke.
The answer is not urgent: it may keep you
A day or two at Milan.

F. You wish, my lady,
I should return?

D. Why not?

F. I understood
Your ladyship to accept my resignation.
It lies with her convenience but to fix
The day of my dismission.
D. Do you wish
To leave my service?
F. I could never serve
Where I am distrusted.
D. Would you reconsider
Your angry speech, I would make some concession.
F. I had cause for anger.
D. That I would concede.
But I too was provoked; and in the end
I came off worst.
F. Not so, my lady.
D. I sought
To learn your secret, and was merely fooled.
F. I understand not how your ladyship
Was first provoked,—at least with me.
D. Nay, true:
'Twas a mistake. We need no explanation,
And may be friends again.
F. I cannot offer
Her ladyship my services.
D. You leave me?
F. 'Tis better that I should. I thank your ladyship

For many kindnesses. I pray sincerely
You may be better suited.
D. No fear for that,
Frederick: for by my soul I think
There is no other man would so have wronged me
As thou hast done... My only fault hath been
To have thought too well of thee. But do not dream
I am unprepared. I have seen thro' thee, Frederick;
Yes, thro' and thro'. My offers of concession,
I made to prove thee, lest thou shouldst pretend
That I was unforgiving. In the letter
I have writ the Duke, thou bearest the commission
Of thy successor. Henceforth I reject thee:
And treat thee as thou deservest. Go, sir, go!
Indeed, I care not whether you go or not.
F. I have then your leave to stay away?
D. My leave?
I bid thee go, and never see me more.
I have done with thee, sir. Go!
[*Exit F. bowing.*
And that's the man I loved; the man for whom
I sank to jealousy. Who is't he loves?
He love! The fool was right: he loves himself.
Now will he bide at Milan. Ah, good sir,
Thy lady is not there, and yet thou goest
Most cheerfully,—thou goest. And it was thou

Didst write soft verses: music too,—thy music.
And I thinking I loved thee was betrayed
A thousand times . . and to be scorned—by thee!
Scorned for another. (*Weeps.*)

Enter St. Nicholas hastily.

ST. NICHOLAS.

My lady, I pray.

D. (*going off*). Nay, sir: I cannot see you.

N. But listen a moment. Tristram locked me in the cupboard . . .

D. What is this? I cannot see you.

N. But Sir Gregory sent me to entreat an interview at once,—he said at once.

D. Then tell Sir Gregory that I will see him in half an hour; until that time let no one disturb me on any account,—not even Sir Gregory. [*Exit.*

N. I'll be well satisfied. I'll be revenged.
To shut me half an hour in a dark cupboard,
With all the flock and flue, 'mong cast-off clothes,
Old boots and shoes: call me an ass, a goose,
And mock my muse . . a fellow . . a common fellow.
A man that is the servant of the servant
Of the adoptive sister of my Laura!
He shall be swinged: Sir Gregory will right me:

Sir Gregory will avenge me. Had heaven but given me
His inches, why, I'd do it myself. I'd flog him,
Till he cried mercy, mercy! mercy, St. Nicholas,
Mercy, I pray! No, no: no mercy, sir.
Down on thy knees! No mercy, sir, from me.
No mercy. (*beating a chair.*)

Enter Sir Gregory.

GREGORY.

St. Nicholas, where's the Countess?

N. (*shouting*). She says that she will see you in half an hour.

G. In half an hour!—Nay, I must see her at once.
You have been betrayed.

N. I have. I have been betrayed.
But you shall see me avenged.

G. And I must see her at once. (*going in.*)

N. (*withstanding him*). She bade me say
She could not see you.

G. Do not stay me, man;
Your happiness is at stake.

N. Nay, she forbade it.
She said in half an hour.

G. (*half-aside*). Why does he stay me?
In half an hour he says. What can I do?
By that time he'll be off. (*Aloud.*) St. Nicholas!

His coach is at the door: in half an hour
'Twill be too late: he will have got away.
Go to the stables, mount yourself at once
With three or four of the grooms, and ride together
To the further gate of the park. There wait for Frederick's carriage:
Stop it. If she is within, I give you warrant
To bring them back: if she be not within,
Follow. She awaits him somewhere on the road.
Wherever it be, take them, and bring them back:
You have a father's warrant.

N. Who is it you speak of, sir?

G. Heigh!

N. Whose carriage shall I stop?

G. Why, Frederick's.

N. And who's the lady?

G. Who is the lady, ask you? Why Laura, my daughter.

N. Laura with Frederick!

G. I went to her room: she's flown, and with a maid. She hath packed up clothes and gone. I am right, I am sure.

N. And shall I stop them?

G. Lose no more time. Begone! Do as I bid.

N. There's some mistake; Laura with Frederick! Why, we were to be married!

G. Fly! fly! St. Nicholas, else 'twill be too late.
[*Exit N.*

The man's a dolt: he'll never be in time,
And I that call him fool, why what am I?
With my grey hairs—and such an idiot,
Not to have seen! And if I had only known
That Frederick loved my Laura, and she him . . .
Why did they never tell me? My dearest Laura, . .
To marry without my knowledge, . . . run away
Without my blessing . . . it shall not be . . . as if
Against my will . . . not to ask my consent . .
And count on my approval. O Laura, Laura!
If I had known—and now no doubt
'Tis past all hindrance . . . Am I not a fool
To wish to stop them? Perhaps they have not started,
I may be in time. I will tell Frederick all,—
I do not disapprove . . nay, I approve.
'Tis better far . . and yet how can I?—
My word is plighted to St. Nicholas.
'Tis better they should get clear off. Heaven speed them!
Why did I send that idiot after them?
I wish they may escape. O Laura, Laura
Without my blessing. Yet thou hast my blessing.
God bless thee! I try and hinder thee? O no.
I will go stop St. Nicholas. [*Hurries out.*

SCENE · 4

Frederick's room as before.

Enter FREDERICK and RICARDO.

FREDERICK (*hastily*).

Good-bye: I'm off. Speed you as well as I.
Laura is to meet me in the park: an hour
Will put us out of reach.

RICARDO.

Farewell. God speed you!
All is prepared at Milan; and ere you are married,
I shall be accepted.

F. Write me word.

R. I will.

F. I'll not believe it till I see your hand.

R. Not if Diana write herself?

F. To me?
That might persuade me. Good luck to you, Richard!
And thanks for all your favours.

R. Favours! eh!
To an old friend! Well. Good-bye!

F. Good-bye.

[*Taking up coat, Exit.*

R. (*leisurely*). He's gone. Bravo! give him two minutes more
And he will be clean gone: and when he is gone
I shall not fear to tell Diana all.—
He is lost to her; and that I have won her liking
Ends her caprice. Now, 'tis my pleasant duty
To send my letter to Sir Gregory (*takes out letter and peruses it*).
And open his eyes: he must not be left groping.
(*looking it over.*) First who I am; and what I have done, and do
To assist his daughter in her happy match.
When he knows that, he'll bless me: and he must tell
Diana of Frederick's marriage; but of me
Keep counsel awhile—better to put that plainer (*goes to inkstand and writes*).
Yet a slight hint of something to Diana,
If I could manage it, would serve me well.

Enter Tristram.

(*still writing.*) Ah, Tristram: come in, Tristram:
(*aside.*) This leaky fool is just the man to do it.—
Lend me your company for half an hour.

TRISTRAM.

Your company! here's wonders. I never knew you ask that before. 'Twas always stand off, Tristram:

and you may go, Tristram: and we don't want you, Tristram. What's come to you now, that you ask my company?

R. Your master's gone, Tristram; and I shall feel lonely.

T. My master is gone: and, as I believe, many thanks to you. I don't know why ever you came here; but since you came all has gone wrong: there's been more secrets and less sense: and now my master, or I should say, my late master, has quarrelled with the Countess and me; and I am turned loose on the world.

R. Do you want a fresh place, Tristram?

T. If I did, you are scarcely the man I should look to; thank you all the same.

R. I could give you some good advice.

T. I don't want your advice neither, sir.

R. You love secrets, though: I have one I could tell you.

T. I have had enough of secrets. I wish you could tell me something that isn't a secret.

R. It's no secret, Tristram, that you love Miss Flora.

T. No, damn it: but it was a secret: and the best of them all. But now my master's gone, I dare tell you a secret, sir. I always disliked you extremely from the first: and I don't think better of you now.—I have to put a few things together before the maids come to do

the room; and if you don't go, I shall leave you to be dusted out.

R. Wait, Tristram: I can teach you better manners. And I have a service to ask of you. Here's a purse to help you and Flora. (*giving.*)

T. Well, this is a different matter. I am sure, sir, I am very much obliged to you. But I never saw the colour of your money before. (*Aside.*) More ducats!

R. No: because you served me better by trying to disoblige me. Now I pay you to oblige me in a trifling matter. 'Tis to find out Sir Gregory and deliver this letter to him.

T. Certainly, sir. Is there anything else that you may require, sir?

R. Yes. Just light me a taper, and I'll seal the letter. You see I don't trust you altogether, Tristram: not yet.

T. You may, sir. I want no more of Mr. Frederick's secrets. Not that they were at all times unprofitable, though he never himself gave me a penny on their account.

R. (*having sealed*). Here 'tis. Will you please take it at once?

T. (*taking*). I will, sir. (*Aside.*) More secrets still: and more ducats. [*Exit.*

R. Enough should grow to reach Diana's ears
From Tristram's curiosity. Meanwhile
I'll watch my time. My rival's safely gone . .
But how to face Diana? I think 'tis best
To take her by surprise: a weaker force
Then overwhelms. I will go change my dress. [*Exit.*

SCENE 5

The hall up-stairs, or other room in Palace. TRISTRAM and FLORA meeting.

TRISTRAM.

Ha, Flora! where's Sir Gregory? What red eyes: blubbering!

FLORA.

I am discharged, Tristram, discharged. The Countess has discharged me for keeping company with you. And she has been crying too, to have to part with me. What ever will come to us?

T. What matters? I'll cheer thee, girl. Look here! More money. There's five pieces of gold: and all for carrying this letter to Sir Gregory. Where is he?

Fl. Who gave it you?

T. That Mr. Ricardo. It's a mystery, Flora: but there's something in it, I do believe.

Fl. Mr. Ricardo?

T. Ay. Who should he be that scatters gold, and seals with a crown, look! and says that he will find us new places, and all sorts of fine promises? A man that would flick me away whenever I came near him.

Fl. Did he, Tristram?

T. Ay, that he would. But I heard him say once that he came here for his cure. I take it he's cured now; and he would make friends all on a sudden, and begs me kindly carry this to Sir Gregory. 'Tis his farewell, no doubt. He will go home, and take me with him.

Fl. And me too?

T. Not if you blubber. Where's Sir Gregory?

Fl. I don't know. The Countess has bid me go seek Lady Laura.

T. Come! I'll with you as far as the library, where I think I should find the old gentleman.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter Diana.

DIANA.

Rejected! by the man I loved rejected:
Despised by him, and by myself betrayed!
And all will know it—I could not hide it.

Our nature hath this need: woman must love.
But oh! to have made my idol of a stone,
To my worship a deaf unanswering stone!
At last I am cured. Since not my rank suffices
To set me above the rules I gave my maids,
I'll never love. Am I to stand and wait,
Till some man fancy me, and then to melt
And conjure inclination at a nod?
O man, thou art our god: the almighty's curse
Crowns thee our master: from the green-sick girl
That mopes in worship of the nearest fool,
To the poor jaded wife of thirty years
Who dotes upon her striker, 'tis the same...
That's not for me. Nay, give it up altogether:
Go free. If man's so base; if that high passion,
That spirit-ecstasy, that supersensual,
Conscious devotion of divinity
Of which I dreamed, is only to be found
In books of fanciful philosophy,
Or tales of pretty poets .. why then away
With books and men! my life henceforth shall prove
Woman is self-sufficing: in my court
No man shall step, save such as may be needed
To show my spirit holds them in contempt.
Women shall be my friends and women only;
And I shall find allies. I had in Laura

All that I could desire, a friend, unselfish,
Devoted, grateful, and as yet untainted
By any folly of love: and her I schemed
To marry away. 'Tis not too late: I'll save her:
She shall not be enslaved: she doth not love.
Her heart is free and generous; it has shrunk
By instinct from the yoke: she will join with me;
And if I tell her all,—or if she have guessed,—
Now when I tell her she will comfort me.
Comfort and counsel, friendship, that I need
And she can give. I never will part from her.

Re-enter Flora.

Fl. Oh, my lady: the Lady Laura is gone, she has run away.

D. Run away!

Fl. Sir Gregory is coming to tell you all about it. She has run away with Mr. Frederick.

D. Nonsense! How dare you tell me . . .

Fl. I guess it's true though. I remember now I used to say how strange it was that such a sweet lady, and so clever and proper a gentleman as . . .

D. Silence, Flora! What has come to you? What makes you say this?

Fl. Because she's not to be found. But Sir Gregory will tell you.

D. Send Sir Gregory at once. (*Aside.*) This is impossible, impossible.

Fl. See here he comes.

D. (*aside*). Ah! if this were Frederick's secret!

Enter Sir Gregory.

What is it? Sir Gregory, tell me.

GREGORY.

I scarce dare tell your ladyship the tidings
I have to bear.

D. (*aside*). It's true! it's true!

G. My daughter
Has run away with Frederick.

(*Diana sinks on a chair; Flora runs to fan her.*)

Ah! my lady!
What have I done? I was too quick.

D. Nay, nay,
Flora, begone. I can hear all. You knew it?

G. I had not the least suspicion of the truth;
Altho' it needed but the merest trifle
To clear my sight. I chanced to find her glove
In Frederick's room. All flashed upon me at once.
I ran to seek her. She was gone. A message
She left was given me, that she would be away

All the afternoon : but since she had taken with her
A valise . . .

D. She, 'twas she . . . O most dissembling,
Ungenerous, ungrateful . .

Fl. I said 'twas true.

D. Begone at once I bid you. [*Exit Flora.*

G. I ran in haste
To tell your ladyship ; but for some reason
Could not be admitted : so I took such steps
To arrest them as I might. .

D. Ha ! they are seized ?

G. I have since repented of my haste : a letter
Put in my hands reveals the whole : 'tis passed 2920
Beyond prevention. It has been maturing
Under our eyes for months. We must give way.
'Tis strange we never guessed it. This very morning
I was in Laura's room ; and when we parted
She made such long farewells, and looked at me
With such reluctance, and such brimming eyes,
I saw she had some trouble untold ; and thinking
'Twas her dislike of Nicholas, I repented
I had ever urged the match. I little thought,
Dear girl, 'twas sorrow that she dared not tell me
Her joy. 2931

D. (*aside*). Her joy ! no doubt ! Here's a fine father !
What doth he wish ? Ah, doubly have I been fooled.

How plain 'tis now to see. The only one
I have never once suspected; the only one
It could have been. And Frederick must have told her
My love of him. All I would have kept secret
And thought was hid, hath been as open as day:
And what I sought to learn hath been kept from me
By them I trusted to discover it.
Tristram, no doubt, whom I supposed a fool,
Hath merely played with me. Thank heaven they are gone.
I'll never see him again. Befooled: befooled.

G. They have been befriended by the Duke of Milan.

D. The Duke of Milan too!

G. It was his letter
I spake of. Frederick is, he tells me there,
His old school-friend; he begs my pardon for him,
Will fête the bride and bridegroom in his palace,
And have the Archbishop marry them. 'Tis thither
They are fled.

D. Then all this is a plot of the Duke's!

G. (*aside*). I dare not tell her more.

D. Who brought the letter?

G. I wish my dear girl joy. She has chosen well:

D. Who brought the letter?

G. Tristram gave it me.

D. (*half-aside*). How came he by it?

Re-enter Tristram.

T. My lady! I have something now.

D. Tristram, I bade you leave the court: how dare you
Appear before me again?
Silence, I say. I know your news: you have served
Your master with such lying skill, I wonder
He did not take you and your Flora with him:
There was not room enough perhaps in the coach
For two such couples.

T. How, if you please, my lady,
Are Flora and I two couples?

D. Silence. Tell me
How you get letters from the Duke of Milan.

T. How I get letters from the Duke of Milan?

D. There's nothing now to hide, so tell the truth.

T. I swear, my lady, that I know no more
Of the Duke of Milan than a babe unborn.
Your ladyship accused me once before
Of having been at Milan, when 'twas plain
That I had not gone, and never wished to go.
Knowing my lady's strong impartiality,
I should not venture.

D. This will not do.

Enter Ricardo.

(*Gregory beckons Tristram aside, and during Diana's first speech whispers him, and Gregory and Tristram go out.*)

RICARDO.

My lady,
The culprit is discovered.

D. Ah, Ricardo!
I had forgot . . was this thy plan? . . if so
I cannot praise thy skill sufficiently.
All hath gone well. And since no doubt thou hast served
Thy master and his friend in all thou hast done,
And under the pretence of aiding me
Hast been the ready man, more than another,
To practise on me, and do me injury;
I'll school my patience till I have satisfied
My curiosity to know what thought
Urged thee,—whom I confess I wholly trusted,
And whom I thought to have made my friend,—that thus
Against the laws of hospitality,
Without the excuse of passion, thou shouldst wrong
A lady so unkindly.

R. Ah, Diana!
Hast thou not guessed my secret?

D. By heaven, sir,
Did the Duke send thee here to insult me too?
R. Dearest Diana, I am the Duke of Milan.
D. Ha! thou! Thy face behind the bush. 'Tis thou.
Should I have known it? No. I can thank God
I knew it so little. By help tho' of thy acts
I recognize your grace. 'Tis like thee indeed,
That hast not scrupled thus to steal upon me
Masked and disguised; by forgery and falsehood,
Written recommendations of thyself,
Making thee out to be some gentleman
Of trust and honour. Oh 'tis admirable,
The use thou makest of thy rank, to creep
Into my secresy, thereby to assist
Thy friend, my secretary, to elope
With an orphan and my ward. Haste, haste! I bid thee;
Lest thou be late for the feast. Bear them from me
My glad congratulations. (*sinks on a chair.*)
R. (*running to her*). Diana! Diana!
D. I need no aid from thee, sir. Nay, begone!
R. In kindness hear what I came here to say.
In justice hear my answer to the charges
Thou hast made. But first I claim my promise.
D. How!
What promise, sir?

R. Your secretary's place
If Frederick left.

D. Make you me still your jest?

R. O dearest Diana, think not that I jest.
I'd be thy secretary all my life,
So I might only take the place which Frederick
Held in thy affections.

D. (*rising*). In my affections! why,
What means your grace, I beg?

R. Diana, Diana!
Have I not won thee? Did I not obey thee
By silence and long absence, till my life
Grew desperate, and my misery made me bold
To come to thee disguised? I thought that thou
Perchance wert adverse to my suit for thinking
I loved thee only for thy beauty's sake,—
Since at first sight I loved and only sight,—
And for thy mind's grace thou wert rightly jealous
Of such a passion. Now, if I guess well,
I have won some favour in these happy days. . . .

D. Favour!

R. And if thou hast dreamed thou hast loved another,
'Tis no impediment: for first this man,
Whom thou hast honoured is my nearest friend;
And not to have loved him were to have disregarded

The only part of me thou ever knewest.
But him, for very lack of loving rightly
Thou hast much mistaken and wronged, and, as I think,
Now for misunderstanding bearest ill-will.
D. I bear him no ill-will, your grace.
R. Nor me?
D. But what you have done?
R. Love can excuse me all.
What woman judges by proprieties
The man who would die for her, and who without her
Regards not life? Passion atones my fault.
D. Your only excuse is your offence.
R. 'Tis thus:
If I am not pardoned, I am not loved; but if
I am loved, I am pardoned. If thou sayst to me
I never knew thee, but I know thee now,
And like thee not: thy three years' love for me
I count for nothing, thy devotion nothing,
Thy misery nothing: thy adventure here
I set against thee; and the hour thou goest
I shall lose nothing: If thou canst say this,
Speak. and I promise
To turn away for ever. Is that thy mind?
D. Is't possible?
R. What possible?
D. Thy——truth.

R. My love? Nay, love's a miracle, a thing
That cannot be where it seems possible,
And where 'tis most incredible is most worth
Our credit.

D. That is true.

R. That thou didst doubt
Was worthy of the greatness of my love.
But now I claim thy faith. Thou mayst believe,
Thou must believe. Indeed, indeed, Diana, 3060
Thou mayst believe. Look'st thou to find love strong?
I have heavenly security:—devoted?
I have no self but thee:—patient? I plead
Three years of patience:—humble? I was content
To be thy servant:—wise? I knew thee better
Than thou thyself; I knew that thou must love:
Or is love tender?—See my childish tears
Crowd now to hear my sentence.

D. Ah, this were love,
If it were so.

R. Diana, it is so.
There is nought to-day in all the world but this,
I love thee. 3071

D. Alas! how was I wrong! Sir, sir!
Thou bringst me, or at least thou seemst to bring me,
The gift of God. Whether it be so or no
How can I tell? 'Twould wrong it—nay I cannot

Take it in haste. I cannot. I understand.
Nay, leave me. I know not what to say .. your blind
Attachment, is't not cured?
R. Cure all but that
By my acceptance. (*kneels.*) I am thy true lover,
Thy only lover. Bid me rise beloved.
D. Hush, some one comes. Rise! rise!
R. Thy hand! 'tis mine, 'tis mine.
(*Kisses it and rises.*)

Enter Sir Nicholas with Gregory. Frederick and Laura following.

ST. NICHOLAS.

They are caught, your ladyship: they are caught,
Driving away together: and Frederick
Was making love to Laura in the coach.
R. Now now! how's this? Frederick so soon returned;
And taken by the honeysucker!
N. Sir,
Your honeysucking Frederick would have robbed
My sweetest flower: but like a skimming swallow
That takes a fly in his beak, I snapped him up
At the park gate.
R. He'll prove a bitter morsel,
I fear, St. Nicholas.

N. My lady, speak.
What shall be done to them that have infringed
The laws of the court? Whatever punishment,
I pray it fall on Frederick with more weight
Than on my Laura. I would not have such rigour
As might defer our marriage.

(*Gregory goes to Laura. Ricardo to Frederick.*)

D. I shall award my judgment on yo[u] two,
Who have mocked not my rules only, but the common
Conventions of society, and preferring
The unwritten statutes of the court of Milan
Have joined to act a lie, and me, your friend,
Deceived and wronged, whom ye had done well to trust.
One only honourable course is left—
My judgment on you is that you be married
As soon as may be. Therefore, Frederick,
I beg that you will draw the contract up
Between yourself and Laura with all speed.
And that my sister shall not lack a portion,
I will endow her with as goodly a sum
As what St. Nicholas promised. Now this time
Let there be no mistake.

N. What's this, Sir Gregory?
Cannot you hear?

FREDERICK.

Your ladyship, I am bound
For ever to your service.

L. (*to D.*). Am I forgiven, Diana?

F. (*to R.*). Richard, how's this?

R. (*to F.*). I have won. (*aloud.*) And let me say
That I for friendship's sake will do as much
Toward Lady Laura's portion as the Countess.

N. Sir Gregory . . Sir Gregory!
Is this the way I am treated? You do not hear?
Sir Gregory, speak!

G. (*to N.*). I hear not what is said, St. Nicholas:
But I can see: and since you have caught your bride
Running away, you must not look to me
To help you hold her. Surely what I promised
I promised in good faith: but what hath happened
Sets me at liberty. (*Laura goes to Gregory.*)

N. And I am left out?
Am I a sacrifice?

D. Sir, be consoled:
You were not more deceived than I.

N. At least
Tristram shall not escape. I do beseech you
He may be punished for stealing my sonnet,
And shutting me in the cupboard.

Re-enter Tristram and Flora.

D. Who come here?

T. and Fl. My lady, we ask for pardon.

R. I take on me
To speak for them.

D. No need for that, your grace;
They are forgiven.

N. Why doth she say 'your grace'?

T. (*to R.*). Ah, why 'your grace' indeed?

R. This Tristram here
Hath done us many a service. Flora too
Hath played a useful part. May not their marriage
Follow on ours, Diana?

N. Yours!

T. (*to audience sympathetically*). His!

D. They may have so much promise with all my heart.

T. Thank you, my lady.
I never did understand anything in the 'Humours of this Court,' and I never shall.

FINIS

NOTES

THE CHRISTIAN CAPTIVES

This play, named after the chorus, is on the same ject as Calderon's *El Principe Constante*, from which common to both plays is directly taken. the differences are historic, but the most *Sala ben Sala*, whose fine figure is substi- *uley*, is a famous warrior; and the whole his claim on English attention, that the Regulus, *Ferdinand*, and his brother *Henry*, *igator*' of more solid renown, were grand- of *John of Gaunt*, through his daughter who was married to *King Joam I.* The s shortly given in the *King of Fez's* long page 103, line 120 et seq.

1886.

first edition the hymn *Jesu dulcis memoria* is to be sung to the music written for it by and Anerio. This was intended to indicate rt of polyphonic music which I imagined for the effect. As the date of the play must be about its use would be an anachronism, but it is one would never be observed, and it may therefore be allowed.

1902.

THE HUMOURS OF THE COURT

The Humours of the Court is founded on two Spanish comedies, which when I read them, appeared to me to be variations of the same story. These are Calderon's *El secreto á voces*, and Lope's *El perro del hortelano*; the latter already used by Molière. My play owes its plot to Calderon, and to Lope the first scene of its third act, which is the opening scene of *El perro del hortelano*. But since in that play the secretary is actually detected in what, in my play, he is only falsely suspected of, and yet, in spite of this, is married by Lope to the Countess, it may be judged that Lope's play is something farcical. I believe this is a full statement of my indebtedness, for where I have borrowed incident I have not, that I remember, translated.

Tattendon, 1893.

OXFORD: HORACE HART
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

UNIFORM EDITION
OF
ROBERT BRIDGES'S POETICAL WORKS.

SOME PRESS OPINIONS.

VOLUME I. Prometheus the Firegiver—Eros and Psyche—The Growth of Love—Notes. Small Post 8vo, *6s.*

TIMES.—'For sheer poetical beauty there have been few things done in our generation more perfect.'

GUARDIAN.—'The new edition is as dainty a one as any poet could desire for his work, and it will no doubt win for Mr. Bridges a considerable portion of the many new readers whom he deserves.'

WORLD.—'Beautiful and scholarly. . . . Mr. Bridges has firmly established himself in the favour of students of poetry, and the present edition should call further extend the appreciation of a writer whose work is always poetic and sincere.'

VOLUME II. Shorter Poems—New Poems—Notes. Small Post 8vo, *6s.*

DAILY CHRONICLE.—'Mr. Bridges is an artist whose work cannot fail to give pleasure to all who care for artistry in English verse. . . . We find here in full measure his sane and manly spirit, his love of life, of beauty and of England, his refinement of thought and of form, his cool and fresh lyric quality.'

SCOTSMAN.—'This new edition cannot but do good to English poetry all the world over, for it makes Mr. Bridges and his work better known than they are.'

VOLUME III. The First Part of Nero—Achilles in Scyros—Notes. Small Post 8vo, *6s.*

MONTHLY REVIEW.—'Of these two fine plays the first is perhaps the more interesting, the second the more beautiful. The reader will find in it (Nero) the keen pleasure of an imperial game of chess.'

MANCHESTER GUARDIAN.—'The verse has a likeness to that of the long and level Massinger, but is full of little deliberate experiments. . . . It is poetry fresh and exultant, breaking upwards through "scholarship".'

VOLUME IV. Palicio—The Return of Ulysses—Notes. Small Post 8vo, *6s.*

QUEEN.—'Mr. Bridges, as befits a Fellow of Corpus, has to an intense degree the classical spirit. "The Return of Ulysses" breathes Greece in every line, and is instinct with the spirit of the Homeric Age from beginning to end. Considered from the point of view of a classical poem alone, it is both powerful . . . . The many admirers of Mr. Bridges's work will rejoice in this complete and well edited collection of his poems.'

GLOBE.—'The work is excellent in characterization, and can be perused with profit as well as pleasure.'

LONDON: SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.

ROBERT BROWNING'S WORKS

AND

LIFE AND LETTERS.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING. Edited and Annotated by AUGUSTINE BIRRELL, K.C., M.P., and FREDERIC G. KENYON. In two vols., Large Crown 8vo, bound in cloth, gilt top with a Portrait-Frontispiece to each volume, 7*s.* 6*d.* per volume.

*** An Edition has also been printed on Oxford India paper. This can be obtained only through booksellers, who will furnish particulars as to price, &c.

UNIFORM EDITION OF THE WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING. 17 vols. Small Crown 8vo, lettered separately, or in set binding, 5*s.* each.

This edition contains Three Portraits of Mr. Browning at different periods of life, and a few Illustrations.

A SELECTION FROM THE POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING. FIRST SERIES, Crown 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.*; SECOND SERIES, Crown 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.*

POCKET VOLUME OF SELECTIONS FROM THE POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING. Small Fcap. 8vo, bound in art-linen, with cut or uncut edges, price ONE SHILLING. (Also supplied in leather binding.)

THE LETTERS OF ROBERT BROWNING AND ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING. FOURTH IMPRESSION. With Two Portraits and Two Facsimile Letters. 2 vols., Crown 8vo, 21*s.*

These Volumes are uniform with 'THE LETTERS OF ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.'

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF ROBERT BROWNING. By [illegible] SUTHERLAND ORR. With Portrait, and Steel Engraving of Mr. Browning's Study in De Vere Gardens. SECOND EDITION. Crown 8vo, 12*s.* 6*d.*

LONDON: SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE.